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HERBERT SPENCER AND OSCAR WILDE.

EXTRACTS FROM 'WORKS AND DAYS,' THE DIARY OF
MICHAEL FIELD.

EDITED BY T. STURGE MOORE.

Entry by Edith Cooper.

March 3rd, 1890.

WE WENT to meet Herbert Spencer at lunch, invited by our sweet Miss Bakers. He is a character—with a sharp, kindly, positive face. Hazel eyes of extreme intelligence, tarnished hair just over the ears and under-growing whiskers. But of all faces I find it most difficult to present his in words, even to myself. I cannot fix the characteristic of mouth and nose and look—yet they are not subtle. The brow wholly without artistic or imaginative qualities; but he wore a black silk skull-cap which hid what in his portrait is magnificent—his domed, philosophic head. He speaks like a man whose every sentence is connected with a general principle—yet there is humour and interest in his talk. It is delicious to hear him making disarmed fun at May's perfect frankness of most sweet folly in conversation. He laughs till the tears flow. I am certain our friends are reforming him, for there is the possibility of disagreeable things in his features. He is very faddy about the smallnesses of eating and drinking and comfort. It was sad to find the great Altruist so self-concerned. For all his giant powers of thought, Robert Browning far surpassed him in moral dignity. At the end of lunch, he said childishly,—‘My feet are cold. I must warm them.’ ‘We will all turn to the fire and warm our feet,’ suggested gracious Miss Rosa; but no!—off he went to his own room and, unless reminded, would have left us without salute, in the oblivion his creature need occasioned. I was shy, for he put on his spectacles to examine a creature so strangely and hopelessly poetic. Sim was mightily audacious. We were talking of picturesque old houses and how beauty endeared a home for us. He said he was devoted to the useful and what tended to life. ‘We live by admiration, hope and love,’ rang out Sim's voice. ‘But if you get a fever and die?’ ‘Then I shall

go on admiring, hoping and loving more and more,' was the intrepid answer. 'You comfort yourself like that,' he said, but his glance appreciated the independence of the stranger. He conversed on slang, under which he includes no misuses of words, only invented expressions which are an end in themselves, with no relation to the history of language and no place in logic. He said the general principle underlying landscape gardening is the emphasis of natural diversities. He was full of the death of the late Japanese Ambassador. It seems he helped that worthy to draw up the new Constitution. On the day when it came in force, the Ambassador was assassinated, in revenge for his having lifted a curtain with his stick, in a temple of the old religion—which curtain he had been warned to respect, as none but the Emperor could go beyond it. After Herbert had started to his club, we saw his drawing-room—by permission. It is bare and false in colour: muddy terracotta walls; muddled carpet with a suspicion of blue; fawn curtains looped like the hangings round a hearse, with edges of impure purple and yellow cords; olive-green couch trimmed with violet velvet; chairs of various deadened puce and pinks; Japanese screen with yellow birds; a nymph Egeria on the mantelshelf in front of a pier-glass of convolved gilt, also two red glass vases and two Worcester pots with red and purple artificial roses and tart green leaves in them. The same I saw in his bedroom as I passed. His marble bust and a large picture of him are the most interesting objects—also the table given to him by his Japanese Ambassador. On a table in front of the window was a desk and two book-holders. I saw in them Burns' poems, Congreve, a novel by Buchanan, George Eliot's *Life and Letters—Middlemarch*. On either side of the mantelshelf hang two landscapes, for one of which he gave the highest price he has ever paid for a picture—£20. It has no least merit, *mon père* Spencer!

We hear he has a habit of frequently stopping his carriage to feel his pulse; also he raves at the sight of curly parsley about his dishes. When he is wondering what the millions of the suns in the universe can mean, with a religious thrill in his voice, he says in the same breath and tone, 'There is fluff coming out of that cushion.' Once he was expounding his nebular theory to Miss Rosa, who is rather deaf. She replied about his abstruse subject, while he was saying, 'I don't think those sausages were sufficiently done this morning—I will have fish to-morrow.'

Entry by Katherine Bradley.

Yesterday, Monday, July 21st, 1890, we were suddenly summoned to Mrs. Chandler Moulton's last 'At Home' in Weymouth Street. The first moments were misery and humiliation. Mrs. Moulton introduced us as a poet, as Michael Field, and we stood, our wings vibrating in revolt; fashionable women lisped their enchantment at meeting with us. A moment came when this could be borne no longer, I laid a master-hand on the hostess, and told her to introduce us by our christian names. After that, George Moore was brought to us. He had heard our names across the room; but he is a brother—one of the guild of letters. His admiration for *William Rufus* is unbounded . . . 'By Jove, it's fine. . . . *Ma foi*, it's good. That old fellow with one eye and the passion of the hunting. The scenes in the forest—I have only read the play five or six years ago—the moment it came out—and once—I never read a book twice—yet I see it before me now.' He has even proposed it to the Théâtre Libre as one of the English plays to be acted. *Long Ago* has disappointed him. We were engaged on an impossible task. It had not the versification of Keats, still there were some fine things in it.

Edith continued the conversation, for I, from far, recognised Oscar Wilde, and desiring to make his better acquaintance, found him by my side, talking easily.

He has a brown skin of coarse texture, insensitive surface and no volcanic blood fructifying it from within—powerful features, a firm jaw and fine head—with hair that one feels was much more beautiful some years ago. It is pathetic when bright hair simply grows dull, instead of turning grey. The whole face wears an aspect of stubborn sense, and the aesthete is discovered simply by the look of well-being in the body (soul take thine ease!), the soft comfort of the mouth and a lurking, kindly laziness in the eye. But the dominant trait of that face is the humour—humour that ridicules and gently restrains the wilfulness, the hobby-horse passion, the tendency to individualism, of the rest of the man. There is an Oscar Wilde smiling ironically at his namesake, the aesthete, smiling with almost Socratic doubt.

'There is only one man in this century who can write prose.' 'You mean Mr. Pater.' 'Yes—take *Marius the Epicurean*—any page.' We spoke of the difficulties of writing prose—no good tradition—he had almost quarrelled with [Theodore?] Watts

because he wanted to write the language of the gods [poetry] and Watts sought to win him to prose. . . .

'French is wonderfully rich in colour-words.' We agreed English was poor in such—I instanced bluish-grey as a miserable effort, and he dwelt on the full pleasantness and charm of the French colour-words ending in 'âtre,'—*bleuâtre*, etc. But we should grapple with this colour difficulty. It should be our faith that everything in this world could be expressed in words. I spoke of *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*¹—of the impossibility of expressing what was happening on that fairy water. . . . By and by, he told me a whole story of the Infanta of Velasquez in the Louvre, with a pink rose in her hand. He was bent on learning the history of that rose, and found it in a portrait near at hand, of a dwarf. Now the princess—let history go off with her rags—had given the dwarf that rose—the dwarf was dancing before the court, and she took it from her hair and flung it to him. He went away in rapture at the consciousness of her love . . . then the doctrine of doubles, and inattention on my part—ultimately the dwarf discovers from a mirror his own hideousness and when they come in and try to rouse him to dance, lies stretched responseless. He is dead—dead, they tell the princess, of a broken heart. She replies, going away—'Let those who love me have no hearts.' . . . 'Fiction—not truth—I could never have any dealings with truth—if truth were to come in to me, to my room, he would say to me, "You are too wilful." And I should say to him, "You are too obvious." And I should throw him out of the window.' Michael: 'You would say to *him*. Is not truth a woman?' 'Then I could not throw her out of the window; I should bow her to the door.'

We agreed—the whole problem of life turns on pleasure—Pater shows that the hedonist—the perfected hedonist is the saint. 'One is not always happy when one is good; but one is always good when one is happy.' He is writing two articles at present in the *Nineteenth Century* on the "Art of Doing Nothing." He is at his best when he is lying on a sofa thinking. He does not want to do anything; overcome by the 'maladie du style'—the effort to bring in delicate cadences to express exactly what he wants to express—he is prostrate after a page of composition. But to think, to contemplate. . . . Henceforth he is determined to write

¹ Watteau's masterpiece in the Louvre: see *Sight and Song*, Poems on Pictures by Michael Field, 1892.

in a language that will only be understood by minds artistically trained. The writing shall not be obscure—quite clear, but its meaning will be seized only by artists. He once wrote a story of Spain—a story in black and silver—in which he endeavoured to give something of the dignity and gloom of Spanish life—like heavy, black velvet cushions—and this story, when translated into French, came out pink and blue. It taught him that after all there were certain colour-forces in English—a power of rendering gloom, not in French.

He has a theory it is often genius that spoils a work of art—a work of art that should be so intensely self-conscious. He classed the Brontës, Jane Austen, George Sand under the head genius. This was when I said to him that there was one sentence of Mr. Pater's which I would not say *I could never forgive*, because I recognise its justice; but from which I suffered, and which was hard to bear—that in which he speaks of the scholarly conscience as male—adding I did not remember where the passage occurred. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is in *Appreciations*, in the essay on "Style," page 7—left-hand side—at the bottom' and in all this memory the one tiny error was that the page is page 8. . . . Genius, he continued, killed the Brontës. Consider the difference between *Jane Eyre* and *Esmond*. Owing to their imperfect education, the only works we have had from women, were works of genius.

'What's that pretty book you have in your hand?' 'A book from our hostess'—he opened it—and must have seen the inscription to 'Michael Field.' Later on he said he would send me his fairy-tales—I gave simply the address, Blackberry Lodge, Reigate. . . . I think he understood.¹

Plato's idea of heaven is simply one of beautiful moments that enter into immortality, of their nature. . . . He, when he gets to heaven, would like to find a number of volumes in vellum that he would be told were his.

What I like about him, is the sense of *bien-être*, of comfort, he conveys to the brain. All that a woman does to a man by her presence on the hearth, or by the tea-table, he does to the brain—neither lulling it nor stimulating it—introducing about it a climate of happiness, so that it is twice itself, freed from depression of fragility or chill. . . . We mourned that the English people do not live to art—have indeed no direct contact with it.

His voice, Edith says, is a bony one, and this is true. His

¹ This must mean that he had hitherto not known who Miss Bradley was.

body is too well tended and looks like a well-kept garden; his spirit, one would say, was only used to irrigate it. Blustersome torrent passing down its craggy human bed—with him it is conveyed by skilled labour in conduits for the ornamentation of his pleasure-ground.

Entry by Edith Cooper.

June 17th, 1891.

We visit Oscar Wilde—being received by Mrs. Wilde in turquoise blue, white frills and amber stockings. The afternoon goes on in a dull fashion till Oscar enters. He wears a lilac shirt, a heliotrope tie, a great primrose pink—very Celtic combination, *ma foi!* His large presence beams with the 'Heiterkeit' of a Greek god that has descended on a fat man of literary habits.

He sat down and told us that in his belief our *Tragic Mary* and Rossetti's *Poems* were the two beautiful books (in appearance) of the century—but he was going to surpass us, and would send us an early copy of his *Tales*,¹ to make us 'very unhappy.' He was delicious on the illustrations, that are not taken from anything in the book, only suggested by it—for he holds that literature is more graphic than art, and should therefore never be illustrated in itself, only by what it evokes.

He was full of the success of his *Duchess of Parma* in America, and was beginning to feel that he must make something and go to Paris! He met Forbes Robertson with much love, and introduced him to us at once—a man of bony intelligence, with sensitive thin features, using as little flesh as possible for their expression. A gay, charming time! *Bien-être* expands from Oscar's irradiated corpulence—from his mossy voice, the way his hands fall and move, and from his courteous eyes, where vivacity springs up round heaviness.

Entry by Edith Cooper.

Wed., May 25th, 1892.

At Mr. Benson's.

... as we are looking at this Costa, Oscar comes up. He shakes hands with Mrs. Costelloe, and therefore I put out my hand, which he takes (afar off) and never addresses a single word to me after. I have not often seen such rudeness—he is not of the men who can be rude offensively and yet escape. There is

¹ *A House of Pomegranates*, designed and decorated by C. Ricketts and C. H. Shannon, 1891.

no charm in his elephantine body, tightly stuffed into his clothes—with a grass-gorged effect—no charm in his great face and head of unselect, Bohemian cast—save the urbanity he can adopt or the intelligence with which he can vitalise his ponderousness. When he shows himself as a *snob* he is disgustingly repulsive. We were not well dressed, as the day had begun with rain—we do not belong to the fashionable world—so Oscar rolls his shoulders toward us. When next I meet him in my choicest French hat, I will turn my back on him, and that decisively. The artist strain in him is crossed with the vulgar respectable—gods and women cannot endure such a cross. His conduct hurts Mrs. C.; indirectly she conveys her reprehension to us.

Entry by Edith.

Oct. 25th, 1892.

The Duchess of Malfi at the Opéra Comique!

Fitzgerald gloats over executions behind us; Le Gallienne wanders about like a young Dante in the shades; Oscar sits as if blowing bubbles of enjoyment, so pervasive are his smiles—they float through the *milieu*. . . .

Entry by Edith.

March 25th, 1893.

At the *Master Builder*.

Oscar is in a box, allowing the people to see him and the silver knob of his cane. He is with his wife. My Love remarks he has a 'well-nourished head'—yes, and that is not only a criticism of his appearance, but of his work. It is well nourished—its force comes from outside. Flaubert and Maeterlinck have fed *Salomé*.

Oscar seems to exhale Paris, and this atmosphere makes one feel easy and gay to look at him. He watches the stage impassively, but with intentness. Our claps help him, and those of a few others, to bring the curtain up at the end of Act IV.

1893.

The Cottage,
Goring-on-Thames.

DEAR MICHAEL FIELD,—

In the case of the Independent Theatre¹ you have to rely chiefly on actors who are out of an engagement—those who have engagements being occupied or away—Tell Grein to select only young

¹ These letters refer to their play, *A Question of Memory*, performed by the Independent Theatre. October 27th, 1893.

actors—there are possibilities of poetry and passion in the young—and picturesqueness also, a quality so valuable on the stage—Shun the experienced actor—in poetic drama he is impossible—Choose graceful personalities—young actors and actresses who have charming voices—that is enough—The rest is in the hands of God and the poet—

I look forward to listening to your lovely play recited on a rush-strewn platform, before a tapestry, by graceful things in antique robes, and, if you can manage it, in gilded masks—

So, you see I have nothing to tell you, except that I am your sincere admirer

OSCAR WILDE.

1894.

DEAR MICHAEL FIELD,—

Write to Miss Elizabeth Marbury,
c/o Low's Exchange,
New York City, U.S.A.

She manages all my plays. I have written to her. I am a wretch not to have answered sooner—but I have no excuse; so you will forgive me—

Your third act was quite admirable—a really fine piece of work—with the touch of terror that our stage lacks so much—I think the theatre should belong to the furies—Caliban and Silenus, one educated and the other sober, seem now to dominate, in their fallen condition, our wretched English drama.

OSCAR WILDE.

THE SORROWS OF GARDENING.

WHOLE libraries of books have been written extolling its pleasures, but the authors are silent touching its woes. It is time somebody spoke up about them ; and a few notes on this aspect of the matter may be helpful to those who contemplate a move into the country and seek joy in a garden, designing—blind worms !—to do the work themselves. Let us divide the subject into sections, and begin with

THE ORCHARD.

The visit of a person or persons in the small hours of the morning seeking to satisfy an appetite for apples which required the crop of two of our best trees, moves me to consider first means of protecting the orchard ; a subject to which seventeenth-century gardeners devoted a significant measure of attention. Gervaise Markham (1625) says it should be fenced in with a stone or brick wall, high strong pale, or great ditch with quickset hedge. Mr. Austen (1665) advises a lusty mastiff or two that will not be charmed in the night-time. Mr. Lawson recommends a Protestant gardener. Mr. John Worlidge (2nd edn. 1675), glancing at the fact that there are astrological rules whereby theft may be discovered (though one would think the disappearance of fruit sufficed without aid from the stars), also charms, spells and sigils to prevent it and even oblige the thief to restore his booty, discounts his faith in the virtue of such measures with the suggestion that sharp iron spikes planted, with small brass wire strained on either side to trip the thief ; or man-traps to hold him by the leg, will serve the end. None of these protective devices really commends itself ; the orchard is walled in on the road side and fortified with barbed wire, but that does not keep the chaps out. (The garden boy, a loyal fellow, says it is the chaps who steal our apples : the unanswered question, When does a Boy become a Chap, and when does a Chap become a Man ? is beside the present point.) There is an old and thick laurel hedge on one side of the orchard, but this divides it only from the front garden and does nothing to keep out thieves ; that hedge, I think, must have been planted as a defence against thunder and lightning and the machinations of

witches. Our ancestors were terribly afraid of thunder and lightning, and the necessity for protection against witches is obvious; a laurel bush, much more a whole hedge, was protection against all three. I do not presume to criticise; no doubt a laurel hedge was quite as efficacious as the two pieces of cold iron (usually an old pair of scissors) laid crosswise under the doorstep; which, as everyone knows, bereft the witch who passed thereover of her evil powers. How the hedge operated in the matter of thunderstorms I do not know; but I suppose they did who planted it. Continuing examination of ancient advice: a lusty mastiff or two? These would cost as much to feed all the year round as the apples are worth, so we turn them down. A Protestant gardener? The garden boy is a Protestant and a member of the choir to boot, so we go even farther than Mr. Lawson advises. Man-traps or sharp iron spikes? The Law is against use of the former and humanity forbids the latter. There remain only charms, spells and sigils, which an unworthy scepticism disdains. After all, it will be as well to resort to the dog; a small one with a sense of duty who will not permit himself to be charmed in the hour of dawn when, I suspect, these raids take place. I would have that dog compel with fierce demonstration the marauder up a tree, and bark for me; then I should put on a dressing-gown and go out to make sure the chap was uncomfortable; and go back to bed. At breakfast-time I might weigh the propriety of calling the dog off with lavish commendation. A few hours in a tree on a chilly morning would cause a chap to reflect; to consider whether the game was worth the candle.

The old authority who laid it down that Liberality is the best fence was right; but there are those who prefer to help themselves.

There is a time when one is prone to regard the apple orchard with a jaundiced eye; namely when pruning is toward. There are trees to prune which is easy, even pleasant; such are those which are considerate enough to grow straight boughs, are not too thickly twigged and allow you to get at them. These have their faults; their tendency is to grow out of reach and produce on branches twenty feet high slender fruit that only the starling and blackbird can reach; and the starlings know this garden; in late summer when the apples begin to swell they come in flocks; they sample the apples on every tree, and finding a ripe one hollow it to the rind which they drop to the waiting snails. People are mistaken who maintain that the starling is a blameless character

and eats only apples assailed by grubs ; all he asks of the apple is that it shall be ripe and juicy ; cooking and eating sorts are alike to him. The same applies to the blackbird.

The majority of trees are not like that ; in their every bud there dwells a wayward sprite ; it grows heavenward for a few inches, then moved by a spirit of enquiry curves boldly in as if to embrace the parent stem : which it should not do : and thus curving throws out on this side and that angular twiglets with no sense of direction at all ; twiglets that are all elbows, knees and knuckles, stiff and scratchy. Their seeming object to choke the whole tree into an impenetrable bush into which sun and air shall not intrude. After an hour's work in the tangle one's inclination is to get the axe and cut the thing down at the root. I would rather prune an overgrown gooseberry-bush than a neglected apple-tree.

And yet when spring comes round and the blossom appears he must be insensitive who does not forget his struggles with pruning-saw, knife and sécateur ; there is nothing so lovely as a wealth of apple blossom ; the cherry orchards of Japan may be all that is claimed for them, but I doubt their beauty exceeding that of the British apple orchard at its best ; the glory of it calls you out of bed to stand shivering at the window and drink in the wonder wrought to its brightest by the risen sun. It is then you deem it a pity that such loveliness should ever give place to mere apples. As a matter of fact, it does not always give such place ; there are trees on which the blossom does not 'set' and remains barren ; but this cannot be regarded as a virtue.

The usual grafting was done in our orchard ; one tree bears cooking apples on one side and eating apples on the other ; all the others have been confined to production of one variety. Unless space is very restricted I fail to see the object of cultivating two kinds of apples on one tree ; our ancestors were veritable tigers for grafting—or grafting, as they sometimes called it. There were beings of an experimental turn who grafted a late-coming fruit upon the stock of a fruit-tree that cometh early, as a peach upon a cherry ; and contrariwise an early-coming fruit upon the stock of a tree that cometh late, as a cherry upon a peach. None of the gardeners who tried these experiments have told how they turned out. A pity. Mascall says that the Dutch, great gardeners in his day as since, discovered a method of producing stoneless peaches ; they did it by grafting peach twigs on a willow stock ;

this daring experiment does not seem to have been tried in England; the man who succeeded in doing it would scarcely have maintained silence. Nor have I found mention of success attending the grafting of a rose upon a holly to the end that the former, emulating the latter, should retain its foliage all winter. That is the disappointing thing about these seventeenth-century writers on garden craft; they tell us what we should do, but omit to say if they have done it themselves. Mr. Austen, now, tells us that the way to colour apples is to bore with an auger a hole in the biggest part of the body of the tree, mingle the colour wanted with water, put that in the hole and stop in with a pin waxed over. I wonder if he ever tried to get blue apples thus. He is scornful of those who tried to give their apples a nice complexion by planting a red rose under the tree; this he assures us is a 'ridiculous conceit'; he is no doubt right.

OF VEGETABLES, ETC.

We have been fairly successful with these; and should have been yet more successful were it not for the mysterious proceedings of the garden boy; it is difficult to understand his attitude towards different vegetables; he thins out the young turnips with a hand so unsparing as to suggest his expectation of roots the size of footballs, and displays a mistaken leniency in the matter of carrots and onions; he cannot bring himself to thin out these; whence the production of large quantities of both acceptable to none but Mr. Binny's pigs. That boy's views concerning potatoes, too; they are comprehensible, but wrong; we should never see a new potato on the table did I not dig them myself and thus outrage the finer feelings of this incipient gardener.

He is not peculiar in this respect; the bucolic conception of a good potato is a big one; a potato the cook can be asked to weigh; a potato whose brobdingnagian size can be boasted in the village: but why should this misdirected favour be bestowed on potatoes and withheld from carrots and onions? A giant carrot is an imposing vegetable, so is an outsize onion. He takes no pride in those humble roots; but will bring his friends to feast their eyes on our French beans, after ascertaining that theirs are less advanced and less prolific. A minor cause of difference between us arises from his passion for cabbages: a vacant corner or strip in the orchard or elsewhere at once presents itself to his mind as a site for more cabbages; impossible to make him under-

stand that the consumption of cabbage in a small household is limited; or, while admitting his plea that we can always sell them (on Thursdays, early closing day, when Mr. Breen tours the country with his cart seeking what he may acquire), that it really isn't worth while growing cabbages to sell at a shilling a dozen, when that vacant corner or strip might be used for something we do want. Happily his principles—I suppose they are principles—allow him to pick the broad beans while still young and therefore at their best, and in autumn he is all anxiety to take up the artichokes; the latter, I think, because the stalks rise to a height of seven feet or more and he wants to see if the bulbs bear relation thereto. You might expect to find an artichoke as big as a prize potato at the bottom of a stalk like that, but we never do. Can it be that the moon has lost its former influence on vegetables? It was an important factor in an elder day, witness the advice of Mr. Worlidge to plant beans when the moon is waning, and Markham's to plant artichokes when it is waxing. The former gentleman, by the way, had a poor opinion of artichokes which he held to be 'of the nature of the potato but not so good nor so wholesome'; he thought if grown in large quantities they would prove a useful food for swine. The fact was, I suspect, that his cook did not know how to deal with them. That comparison with the potato invites notice of the scant attention devoted to what Cobbett called 'that soul-destroying root,' by the gardeners to whose works reference has been made. Though the potato had been introduced into this country in the later years of the sixteenth century it was held in low esteem, and was not generally cultivated until the time of George III.

Though the site of the bed was selected with all care and the bed itself prepared according to the directions of the best modern authorities, our asparagus has not responded as it should; the fern it produces is very beautiful, but there is nothing to eat. And yet every encouragement was given it. True, we did not when planting know the device to which Mr. Worlidge makes dubious reference, i.e. putting rams' horns at the bottom of the trench, a proceeding 'thought by some curious persons' to make asparagus prosper, having a 'kind of sympathy' therewith. Possibly a dawning conception of the virtues of bone manure. The lettuces, too; the soil must be too rich for these, for they 'bolt' skyward; were a prize for tall lettuces offered at our annual flower show we should carry it off against all competition with

exhibits three feet high ; the garden boy says rabbits like them very much. He keeps rabbits. So also the cauliflowers ; they promise great things, then expand and open out like ill-made bouquets ; they seem unable to keep their heads, if it may be so expressed.

Our gooseberries do well, but do not always benefit us ; we are allowed to take the green ones, but those left to ripen are apt to reach the maws of the chaps. For some reason the chaps do not care for strawberries and leave these for us and the birds ; of course we net them carefully, but thrushes get in all the same. People say birds eat soft fruit—any fruit—to assuage thirst, and bowls of water diverts that thirst into a legitimate channel. Bowls and basins kept full of pure spring water stand all over the place accordingly, but the birds do not understand, and use them for bathing. To slake thirst they prefer strawberries and loganberries. Turn we now to

THE LAWN.

This, which has been the means of revealing the griefs of gardening, was formerly a commercial garden ; its conspicuous features were some 180 feet of glasshouses which had been consecrated to tomatoes. These had to go. But where ? How ? An enterprising market gardener from afar came to the rescue ; he would take them, glass, pipes, bricks and woodwork, and make us a lawn in return. So he tore down and carried off all the material that might be useful to him : clinkers, ashes, broken glass, broken bricks, decayed wood, lengths of wire, odds and ends of rusty iron were not useful to him. He did remove the furnace, a weighty item, but repented him of the step, for it lies by the roadside half a mile away to this hour. He also repented his bargain and sought to compromise ; he would level the ground and leave one small glass-house if we would pay for the seed and, he added, with an eagerness that did not then seem suspicious, 'sow it.' We agreed, and adopting the judicious advice of a neighbour, left the ground to settle during the winter and put off the sowing until the spring.

Did you ever sow a lawn—a big one suitable for tennis, a hundred feet by fifty ? There is more in it than you might think ; long, long before the job was done I recalled with bitter comprehension that market gardener's eager stipulation that we do the sowing. In the first place the authorities differ materially concerning the quantity of seed required ; one says 4 oz. per square yard ; another

says two; and others say anything between. The Judicious Adviser before-mentioned pointed out that quantity depended on the nature of the soil; grass, it was true, would grow anywhere; this garden was 'in good heart' and $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of seed per square yard would suffice. Incidentally she was right about grass growing anywhere; it does particularly well on gravel paths and flower-beds.

When spring came round the seed had to wait; that nicely levelled expanse was green, but with shepherds' purse, chickweed, plantain and a dozen more, and it glittered in the evening sun with what might have been diamonds but was only the profusion of broken glass that market gardener did not want and the winter rains had brought to light. There was nothing for it but hard work; wife, self and garden boy attacked with hand forks and old table knives and cleared the whole 5,000 square feet; we gleaned basketsful of glass, rusty nails, etc., subdued elevations and filled in depressions; and then we stood back and said, 'Now we can do the sowing!' We were wrong; grass seed must be sown when the air is still; try it in the lightest of breezes and you simply make a mess of it; and that spring the air was seldom still save at night. The poets who write so lovingly of gentle zephyrs do not know what would-be sowers of lawns say about them and couldn't print them if they did. But wind does not prevent weeds from growing, and while we waited for still hours they grew; in a word, we spent another fortnight on hands and knees harvesting that new weed crop, and thinking that perhaps we might have done better to dispense with a tennis lawn. Seizing hungrily upon every possible hour we spread the seed and sifted earth over each square yard as it was sown. Still and dry hours were far between and the work extended over a full month; grass was sprouting at one end before we reached the other, but it was comforting to see it grow nearly as fast as the weeds had done. Duly rolled and profusely planted with bird-scares, the task seemed finished; but it was not; we had taken in a wide strip of what had been kitchen garden, and ere long strange growths appeared thereon. It was rhubarb; an estimable vegetable (or fruit), but misplaced on a lawn. We dug them out; they came again; and again; and again; the perseverance of that rhubarb was wonderful but exasperating. It had to go at whatever cost, so the tender young grass was sacrificed and holes dug deep down to the roots, which proved to be ancient and large; then wood and paper was

piled in, drenched with paraffin, kept burning. Well-roasted rhubarb root does not thrive; after a time the holes were filled in and re-sown; and no more rhubarb appeared. Paraffin oil, by the way, is a useful thing in a garden—more effective in banishing ants, or emmets as they call them in these parts, than any patent preparation or soot; which last beseebeth not flower-beds; but don't use it except on gravel; paraffin is as fatal to plant life as to ants.

The lawn is two years old now and one half is all we could wish; the other half is not; I suppose its heart was less good than the other, and the thick luxuriant growth on the south side is a contrast to the thin sparse verdure on the north side. In the regretted absence of our Judicious Adviser we took advice from others: 'A good dressing of basic slag in the autumn,' said one. 'Sulphate of ammonia,' said another, 'a good dose of it now.' 'Try lawn-sand,' quoth a third; 'capital thing, lawn-sand. Apply it? Oh, any time of the year.' A fourth adviser recommended something else which I have forgotten. The defective area shall be measured off into thirds and each third treated with one of those three remedies. Thus shall we conciliate all three advisers and—see what happens.

I hope we may hit upon the right thing, for I share the love of Francis Bacon for a lawn. It is common knowledge that when that great man was not making speeches in parliament, or immersed in affairs of state or pleading cases in court, or colloquing with Essex or writing philosophical essays or (perhaps) the plays of Shakespeare, he devoted himself to his garden; and he greatly admired a lawn: 'Because the green hath two pleasures: the one because nothing is more pleasing to the eye than grass kept finely shorn; the other because it will give you a fair alley in the midst.' His ideal garden was thirty acres, of which four were to be lawns and 'alleys.' One wonders how his men kept them 'finely shorn' with the scythe; either the art of mowing has lost delicacy since the invention of the lawn-mower a century ago, or the Elizabethan standard of fine shearing fell short of ours. Thirty acres is a large garden, but in those days such were the rule; that of Ely House, Holborn, lease of which the Bishop of Ely granted to Sir Christopher Hatton, covered forty acres; and for this the fortunate tenant paid a quit rent of one rose per annum. Queen Elizabeth, possibly, had a say in fixing the terms, for Sir Christopher was a favourite of hers; their relations distantly recall those

subsisting between Queen Victoria and Lord Beaconsfield, though her late Majesty never, in her most fervent epistles, called Dizzy her 'Mutton' or her 'Bell Wether.'

My affection for the lawn is something tempered by the attention it demands. If it is to be pleasing to the eye it must be rolled at least once a week and cut once a week, and weeded at all spare moments if plantain, clover and sundry other unwanted green stuff is to be kept within bounds. And what is a lawn without shade? Shade in summer means fallen leaves in autumn which means daily work with besom or rake till the trees are bare, or the worms with their insatiable appetite for dead leaves disfigure the whole.

OF WEEDS.

'Well, my dear! At any rate, there'll be no more weeding!'

In some such terms, I am persuaded, Eve sought to console Adam as they passed out of Eden. Our First Father was a weak character, witness that interview with the Serpent; and we may take it for granted that Eve made him do work that involves backache.

If 'One year's seeding means seven years' weeding,' as the adage hath it, then the outlook is gloomy, for I assume (hoping to be wrong) that two years of the one means fourteen of the other; and the prospect of twelve more such years as we have had is daunting—depressing. Some experts bid you dig the weeds in; others say dig them out; we have tried both and the results are the same; the weeds rise again and flourish. With some few species it is possible to cope: bindweed, for instance, of which Gerard so truly remarks that it is unprofitable and hurtfull unto eche thinge that groweth next—the old herbalist says that it has an evil smell, but I have not noticed this additional defect. Anyway, if you, defeated by its long, straggling, brittle roots, cut down the pest often enough it gives in and dies, but I dare not say how often the cutting is necessary. Sow-thistle, torn up before it seeds, is easily disposed of. It is rather surprising that sow-thistle should not have been exterminated long ere this; for one of the sixteenth-century writers, I forget which, has left it on record that the weed 'sometimes conceals marvells or treasure.' You might think that the husbandman, inspired by rosy Hope, would dig out every sow-thistle he saw and do the thing thoroughly, with the result that the species became rare, if not extinct. We must conclude that frequent disappointment undermined faith,

for that weed flourishes in distressing plenty. So does dock, which our fathers knew by the name of monk's rhubarb; and doubtless it was the name that led Mr. John Bennett, chirurgeon of Maidstone, to use it in default of other medicine for the ague of a butcher's boy: 'for a shift' Mr. Bennett 'took three or four leaves of this which he stamped and strained with a draught of ale and gave it in the morning'; and 'it wrought extremely downwards and upwards'; and in the end 'the strength of the boy overcame the force of the physic; it gave over working and the lad lost his ague.' Nothing is done in medicine, as in other sciences, without bold experiment; but one feels sympathy for that butcher's boy. Rhubarb was considered a hot medicine, but oddly enough it 'cooled the hottest fevers.' Cultivated as it seems to have been in every garden, it is strange that rhubarb should not have come into use for the table until about 1820.

But I wander from the weeds. Of all perhaps the dandelion is the most familiar and least popular. Nobody tries twice to get rid of it by digging; once, in curious mood I dug out a particularly luxuriant specimen, and exercising care worthy of a better cause got up the root whole: nineteen inches of it. Since then I place my trust in petrol or creosote; cut off the root just below the foliage and touch it with either; that makes an end of the dandelion; this remedy is applicable to any 'tap-rooted' weed. Or to anything that grows; creosote is inimical to all plant life; ampelopsis, for instance, will not lay one of its delicate claws on wood that has been dressed with it, no matter how dry.

It is curious that while our forefathers regretfully recognised that 'weedes are alwaies growing,' as Mr. William Lawson said (1618), they knew no methods of destroying them; they seem to have relied entirely on the spade; thus, in the Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII, under date 1530 is the entry, £1 4. 6. for weeding, delving and ordering the Royal Garden at Greenwich. Weeding, you observe, is given pride of place. There were correctives for other plagues: thus, to banish field mice you were to catch a weasel, burn him to ashes and scatter those on the beds: then no mice would come near. Without having tried this plan, recommended by Mr. Lawson, I think a live weasel would give better results.

We, at any rate, cannot complain of lack of antidotes; but I confess to loss of faith in the poisonous weed-killer that figures in murder trials and gives a pain to the cat or dog eating grass

medicinally. For gravel paths water as nearly boiling as it can be brought to the scene of action is as good a weed-destroyer as one wants. On a day when the ground is well warmed by the sun pour it liberally on the weeds ; and forthwith they shall wither and die. This, of course, is only a variant of the baking process which sterilises ; you can't very well dig up the whole length of a path and bake it ; and boiling water, needless to say, kills only weeds whose roots lie near the surface ; it were waste of time and water to try it on what our forefathers called dog-grass or couch-grass and we know here as 'squitch' ; for of all weeds of the grass kind that is the worst : 'it creepeth in the ground hither and thither in long white roots . . . platted or wrapped within one another very intricately, insomuch that where it happeneth in gardens among pot-herbs great labour must be taken before it can be destroyed' : which is putting the case temperately : leave one inch of one of those brittle white roots and another crop of squitch is assured. I fear that in former days the weed was encouraged beyond its deserts, as the roots were collected to make paper, an industry that gave employment to numerous women. Labour was cheap then, and paper dear.

Another exasperating weed is the stinging-nettle which, like the squitch, creepeth in the ground, but in all directions. Try and get rid of an old nettle ; at first it seems easy enough ; the stringy root creeps just below the surface and is readily followed ; then, when you have got out seven or eight feet of it the thing takes a headlong dive into the soil under a fruit tree or wall, and leaves you beaten. Or it starts from a wall, its roots far in between the stones ; cut it close and paint with creosote or petrol, and it breaks out in a new place strong and healthy as ever. Of course you can turn nettles to account ; as most people know, the young shoots make the best spinach, and could we eat all our nettles in that shape I should be the last to complain. Strange that the seventeenth-century gardeners did not know that nettles were good to eat—at least if they did, none has mentioned it, discerning as they were in finding uses for plants of all sorts and descriptions ; burdock, for instance ; we root it up ; our ancestors found that pieces of the leaves 'given to drink with old wine dothe wonderfully help against the bitings of serpents.' Which suggests that this prescription was imported from some country where serpents abound ; in England they were never so many that it was worth while to tolerate the burdock.

There are weeds which can be regarded with a lenient eye, like the mullein or verbascum. It is decorative, when at full height it puts forth that wealth of yellow blossom, holly-hock-wise; and here verbascum thrives; the tallest we have had was nine feet six inches, but that was exceptional, six or seven feet being the usual altitude. A hardy plant, it is only too good at reproducing itself; when the blossoms yield to the wind the seeds germinate with unerring certainty, spring up where least wanted and spread their large leaves tenderly like unto a mothering hen over all about them. They are thick and woolly, those leaves, denying sun and air to the vegetation around; in an elder day lamp-wicks were contrived therefrom 'because of their cottony substance.' Probably they did very well; they are certainly slow to burn though given every chance.

Even as entomologists speak of a 'Painted Lady' year or a 'Camberwell Beauty' year, when those rare butterflies appear in unwonted numbers, so might we label the years by weeds. It is curious how one species predominates in any given year—not that any are ever absent: thus, in 1929 we were flooded with shepherd's purse; 1930 was a groundsel year; and 1931 was a creeping buttercup year; the orchard so carpeted that fallen apples lay hid there-among and rotted. We have been advised to import geese to batten on those creeping buttercups. It seems a good notion—turning weeds into roast goose.

A final hint on this absorbing topic of weeds: when laying out paths don't be persuaded to use river gravel, however convenient and cheap; the sand wherewith it is mixed is apt to contain too many spores of river-weed, and as this flourishes on paths as well as it does in water, you would have your work cut out to get rid of it.

FLOWERS.

These be the joys of gardening, and of them is there naught to say in a plaint of its woes.

E. D. CUMING.

ART, CRAFT AND TOM FLAGGON.

BY CHARLES LLOYD-JONES.

‘Who lives in that jolly cottage?’ I asked.

‘Tom Flaggon and his sister Janet, a poor old couple,’ said Mrs. Bidsing, my hostess, wife of my uncle Maurice Bidsing, the Rural Dean.

The weather-worn cottage was built partly of flint with brick quoins, partly of white weather boards. Its mellow roof was of russet-red tiles, tinged with the green of ages. Honeysuckle had almost smothered the rambler roses on an arch across the tiny wicket-gate. On each side of the short brick path up to the door was a blazing riot of snapdragons, columbines, lupins and poppies. The cottage itself was decked with climbing roses and three kinds of clematis, white, pale-blue and deepest purple. On the gate hung a neatly painted notice—

HONEY,
LAVENDER,
HERBS,
HAND-WEAVING,
BOOTS-MENDED,
DUCKS.

‘Of course the whole place looks far too good to be true,’ I said. ‘I should imagine that it had been faked into lovely dilapidation by a clever architect: its garden driven wild by experts bribed away from Kew: the orders for hand-weaving booked by a faked rustic sitting at a faked loom, and carried out in Bradford: the ducks from France kept in a refrigerator in the cellar—’

‘Don’t be so horridly cynical.’ Mrs. Bidsing cut short my libellous catalogue. ‘The Flaggons are genuine enough. I think that Janet certainly has enough gumption to see that the place is irresistible to sentimental people on the look-out for old picturesque corners of England. That’s why she puts up with creepers all over the cottage and crawling creatures in her bedroom. She does exploit the place. You could buy better honey than hers rather cheaper at Fortnum and Mason’s. But I don’t blame her.

And Tom is absolutely natural. He never thinks at all. He's the boot-mender. Oh dear, he mends them so badly. And he put iron tips on the boots your uncle wore for Mrs. Crooks's funeral. Your uncle didn't notice—he wouldn't—until he heard himself clip-clopping over the chancel flag-stones. It was most embarrassing. Poor Tom is always day-dreaming. He's supposed to do the weaving: but I don't think he can ever do any. I asked him once to make me some stuff to cover the dining-room chairs. Your Aunt Fanny sketched out such a pretty pattern. But he never finished the job.'

'Did he ever start?' I asked. I knew my Aunt Fanny's taste in colours all too well. I had an idea that were a man sitting on tapestry of her design he would still feel underneath him the clash of purples, pinks and browns he could not see.

'He started. But when he had made quite a little piece he said some accident had happened to his loom. I never heard that he'd ever mended it.'

I wondered whether those boots that had so embarrassed the assembled mourners had been iron tipped by 'some accident' too. Tom Flaggon sounded as if he might do a great deal more thinking than Mrs. Bidsing supposed: and might have a sense of humour she would certainly not approve of.

'I'm going to ask him to weave me a suit-length,' I said. 'Will you come in with me?'

'I think,' said Mrs. Bidsing very definitely, 'that I will let you go alone to-morrow. I'm very fond of Janet Flaggon, and I do wish we could do something to help her, but Tom's very difficult.'

When Mrs. Bidsing said that anyone was very difficult she meant that he was an unbeliever, irrevocably damned. Her speech was mild, but her missionary spirit was fiery. She never admitted any difficulty until all was obviously, absolutely lost.

'Yet I like him,' she said regretfully. 'He's a kind man. But such a silly old man. So wasteful. Half a crown each he paid for those clematis on the cottage, and half a crown for another that died. Janet told me. And he simply hasn't the money. By the time he's paid for his leather I don't suppose he earns a pound a month by cobbling.'

I was, by this time, really interested in Tom Flaggon, who would spend a fortnight's income on flowers at a burst. I asked my uncle about him after dinner.

'An idler,' said my uncle, and filled his port glass. 'He's a travelled man too! He's been to France, I believe.' (France was about forty-five miles away as the aeroplane flies.) 'But he didn't learn much on his travels. I'm sorry for his sister.'

I heard no more just then. The front-door bell rang and Timothy Farning arrived to be my fellow-guest for the next few days. No one asked questions on the subject of their choice if Timothy happened to be in a mood for talking. He chose a subject then, and told everyone all about it. To-night his subject was pictures. He had just helped an impoverished friend to sell his ancestors. The poor friend had set no store by two pictures of bewigged gentlemen hanging on his dining-room wall. They were almost indistinguishable behind a coating of four generations' dirt. But Timothy had declared that they must be by Gainsborough and had brought a dealer to see them. The pictures were not by Gainsborough: but at any rate they were by some minor master of that period, and Timothy's friend was more than pleased by the price he got for them. Timothy was rich enough to refuse a commission: he got his reward by being accepted as a connoisseur. Timothy told us all about it. He was rather boring; but I could not help liking his enthusiasm, and his admission that he had really made a very bad shot at identifying the artist.

As my uncle was busy with the affairs of Church next morning, I took Timothy with me to call on old Tom Flaggon.

We met Janet first, a round little woman of about sixty-five. Her pink face shone; her grey hair shone; her neat gingham frock was spotless. But I did not like the prim pursing of her lips, nor the glint of suspicion in her beady dark eyes.

'Tom,' she called sharply into the cottage. 'Tom, here's someone with work for you.' She emphasised the word 'work.'

She led us into a tiny sitting-room, patterned with sunbeams that thrust in between the slats of a crooked venetian blind. There I had time to notice a charming, rush-seated, ladder-backed chair and a pair of excellent early Staffordshire figures before Tom Flaggon came in.

Tom Flaggon was a shock. He was not at all like the village cobbler I had expected to see, nor was he at all like his sister. He was tall and spare; a golden-grey stubble covered his cheeks and chin. His head was as bald as an egg. He was wearing a decent suit of loose homespun. He had an air of almost scholarly detachment from this world's crudities. His eyes were a sensitive man's

eyes, and his hands less gnarled than an old cobbler's hands have any right to be.

'Good morning, gentlemen,' he said. His accent was strong Cockney-Kentish, but he spoke like a man to whom expression comes easily.

'Good morning,' I said. 'I'm Mr. Bidsing's nephew.'

'Oh yes,' he said, not very politely. His sister looked at him sharply. 'Is it boots to mend? I haven't had any work from the Dean since I made a bit of a mistake with a pair of his. I was sorry about that.'

'Throwing away good custom,' chirped Janet.

'It's not boots,' I said. 'I was wondering if you'd weave me some cloth for a suit. Something like that you're wearing yourself.'

'I'm afraid the loom's broke.' There was a twinkle in the old man's eye.

'If it's my aunt's chair-covers——' I began.

Janet snorted.

'I couldn't do 'em,' Tom went on, putting down all his cards. 'I'm poor, very poor.' Janet snorted again. I was beginning to detest that woman. 'But I couldn't make stuff that colour. I was servant to an artist once, sir.'

'And got the silly ideas, and the swank, and the——' Janet started.

'Shut up, you.' Tom cut her short.

With interruptions and admonitions from Janet punctuating our talk, we settled at last that Tom should weave me a suit-length at eight and sixpence a yard. Janet promised that he should set to work on it at once. She was certainly the driving force in the establishment. Tom seemed, as I had expected, to have a good deal more intelligence than my aunt supposed. But he seemed, too, to use it chiefly in inventing plans to avoid work. He was an engaging old ruffian.

Timothy had been fidgeting about, but saying nothing all through our discussion. I could see that something was exciting him. The moment we had finished our business he could control himself no longer. He blurted out, 'Miss Flaggon, will you please pull up that blind and let me look at that picture?'

Janet and Tom stared at him.

'I know, I know. It's very rude of me.' Timothy was already on his feet, moving towards the picture. 'But I must see. It's amazing. It's incredible.'

Janet pulled up the blind, looking at Timothy very suspiciously.

As the light fell on the picture, Timothy only just smothered a shout. The picture represented a bit of a French street, a café, a tree, blue sky, flat-faced house. It seemed to my inexperienced eye very clumsily drawn. Everything that could in nature have been tinged ever so faintly with yellow was, in the picture, as yellow as paint could make it. Timothy peered at the signature. 'It's—it's a Van Gogh,' he announced in a tone of voice I thought was reserved exclusively for saying 'It's a boy' or 'England's won the golf.'

It was certainly an astounding bit of news. Van Gogh was a painter who made no money while he was alive. But he went mad: then he died: then he became famous: then millionaires began to fight for his pictures. If Timothy was right the poor old Flaggon had several hundred pounds hanging in a fumed oak frame on their sitting-room wall.

'And what's Van Koff?' said Janet.

'It's a café where I was often drunk of an evening when I was servant to an artist, a nice gentleman,' said Tom. 'It was painted by a mad chap named Vincent. There's his name on it. But it's not Van Koff. That wasn't the name of the place. Of that I'm sure.' The old man was looking rather wild. Timothy seemed to have stirred up some of his most gaily adventurous memories. But Timothy was not bothering about Tom. He gripped me by the arm. 'Now what about it?' he insisted.

Tom's story rang true. Van Gogh's name was Vincent and he usually signed his pictures with that name only.

'Was the place Arles?' Timothy asked. Van Gogh painted for some time at Arles.

'Might have been. I never was good at those foreign names, not to know 'em again. But it wasn't Van Koff.'

'No, I know. Van Gogh is the name of the painter. He's very famous now. That picture's worth a lot of money.'

'What'd it be worth?' Janet snapped out. 'I'd sell the bilious-looking thing. Would we get five pounds for it?'

'Now then,' Tom put in. 'Whose is it to sell? And who's been wanting to burn it these twenty years and more? If anyone gives me five pounds for it, it'll be my five pounds. And don't you forget it, Miss Janet.'

Timothy caught my eye and smiled. 'If it's genuine,' he told them, 'I dare say it'd fetch nearer five hundred than five.'

'Five hundred pounds!'

Tom echoed Janet.

'Five hundred!'

The old brother and sister were staring at each other. Neither spoke: but anyone could see how much long-stored antagonism Timothy's discovery had brought to the surface. On Tom's face was a beatific grin. All that money because once he was mixed up with mad and disorderly artists and had treasured a crooked picture of the place where he used to get drunk. Janet's little red mouth was pursed up tighter than ever. She was a hard, righteous little woman. Only the thought of all that money was making her stomach Tom's triumph in silence. Her penny-careful old brain was hard at work.

'Let's slide,' I whispered to Timothy. 'I'm not going to sit through a family row.'

Timothy nodded.

'We must go, Mr. Flaggon,' he said. 'But if you and—er—Miss Flaggon decide that you'd like an expert's opinion on the picture, I could arrange it. I know a man who would be very much interested. I'm staying with Mrs. Bidsing for a few days. If you'd like me to ask him, just let me know.'

'God bless you, sir,' Janet said a bit too obsequiously as we went. Tom raised a courteous but completely independent hand to salute us. We were both taken with Tom.

Timothy walked back to lunch in silence. He was the discoverer of an unknown picture by a new old master, and he was quite conscious of the importance it gave him. He could not refrain from telling Mrs. Bidsing that her scallywag acquaintance, Tom Flaggon, had a picture worth five hundred pounds.

'I hope his sister takes the money and invests it safely,' she said. 'Though, indeed, with so much poverty about I should have thought that people would find something better to do with five hundred pounds than to buy a picture.'

'Tom Flaggon is poor enough,' I suggested. But my aunt changed the subject.

That afternoon Janet came to see Timothy. At least she came with some honey she thought my aunt might fancy, and managed to buttonhole Timothy. She explained that she wanted a talk with him before Tom got at him. 'Tom's got such a wheedling tongue,' she said. She told him what a wastrel Tom was. She told him she had supported Tom for years. She asked Timothy

to sell Tom's picture, but forbade him to let Tom touch a penny of the money. Her eyes filled with tears as she told us about her hard life. She might have won us all over if she had only forgotten to be avaricious for a moment. When she had gone we realised that she had made good use of the atmosphere of soft-heartedness she had created. She had deliberately swindled my aunt out of two shillings over the honey. Even my aunt had to admit that Janet was a robber. Timothy and I were disgusted with her: considering that Timothy was going out of his way to make her fortune.

Timothy wrote to his expert that night. As he dropped the letter into the box he remarked to me, 'I'll grudge that sanctimonious old hen every penny Tom lets her lay hands on.' We went to the village pub to pass the next hour, and there ran into old Tom Flaggon. Tom was telling everyone about the picture the gentleman had said was worth fifty pounds. It was judicious of him to cut down the price. I supposed that the old chap could not quite keep silent about his good luck, but he was not going to let everyone know how much he really expected to get. We could not stop him ordering a pint apiece for us: but he showed no signs of having lost his head. We sat and talked and found old Tom good company.

He told us about his time in France. Timothy recognised the name of the artist he had been servant to, a rich amateur who never did any work that lasted. But old Tom was loyal. He thought him a great man. He thought little and remembered less of the madman that had painted his picture. His employer had given him the picture. He had bought it from the poor madman out of pity for a few francs: and had had a fine cursing from him too. Then Tom told us a lot about gardening. He did not boast, but I gathered that he really worked much harder than Janet would admit. We went home feeling that Tom deserved a little money. He would certainly squander the lot. With his rich artist he had picked up an attitude towards money he would never shake off. But Timothy and I agreed that when a man is nearly seventy he is entitled to as much extravagance as he can still enjoy. On even a hundred pounds old Tom would have a couple of years' real fun.

Next day the story was all round the village. Tom disgusted his sister by taking the day off. The wool for my cloth had yet to come: when it came he was going to make thirteen shillings

on the weaving in a couple of days. 'So,' said he, 'what more does the woman want?' Everyone who looked forward to borrowing from Tom in the future was anxious to buy him beer to-day. He accepted in moderation. He told us that if he got even twenty pounds out of the picture he was going to make his sister pack up and come for a week's real holiday. 'But likely enough we'll get nothing,' he said. The old chap was trying not to let optimism run away with him. I wondered what his sister had been arranging to do with the money if he once let her get it. Not to take Tom for a holiday, I would have sworn.

Next morning Timothy heard from his expert, that he would come, cheque-book in hand, ready to pay a good price for a genuine Van Gogh. But he could not leave London for three or four days. He asked Timothy to keep the news quiet and to drive off any competitor. Timothy and I strolled down to the cottage to tell Tom the news and got a very chilly reception from Janet. Tom was looking glum. Janet snapped a discourteous 'Thank you' at us for the information and gave us a broad hint to go.

'I've got your wool, sir,' Tom called after me. 'And you get down to work and weave it up,' I heard Janet's bitter voice as we retreated: 'pretending you're a gentleman of fortune, strolling round all day soaking free drinks.'

There was more of the tirade than that, but we did not wait to hear. We got out of earshot and waited for a few minutes, watching the number of visitors to the cottage. Everyone was making small purchases to get a chance to see the famous picture. It was too late to do much to help Timothy's expert by keeping the discovery dark. Still, it was not our business to help him. A little competition might raise the price.

It was Wednesday. The expert was to come on Saturday. All through Wednesday and Thursday the fame of Tom's picture spread. On Friday my uncle had letters from friends living anything up to twenty-five miles away saying that they must come and see the famous painting. Timothy, the discoverer, was a proud man.

But hard on the heels of the postman came Janet. Her eyes were full of genuine tears. Her little mouth was not compressed for once. In a flood of temper and frustrated greed she poured out her news. The Flaggon's cottage had been burgled. The Van Gogh had gone. She had been disturbed before dawn by Tom's shouting. The old man was crumpled up in his night-

shirt on the garden path, thrown down by the thieves he had tried to withstand. Two dark chaps, Tom said they were. The robbery had been a simple job. The sitting-room window smashed: the catch pushed back: a jump into the room and out again, and the picture was theirs. Tom had heard the smash and rushed downstairs. But at his age he could do nothing against two young men. The thieves had got away in a car. The neighbours agreed that they heard a car drive away just before Tom's shouting disturbed them.

It was heart-breakingly bad luck for the old couple: yet we could not be sorry for Janet. There was an atmosphere of baffled miserliness about her that repelled sympathy: and she implied that it was all Timothy's fault in any case. It was Tom's loss that really touched us. He took his misfortune very philosophically with a wry smile. 'Well,' he said slowly, 'I did get a pint or two from some as'd never bought me nothing before. And now I'll be in the papers. That'll bring a bit of business, perhaps. And we're no worse off.'

With that he settled down to his weaving and promised me the cloth for next day. Timothy wrote to put the expert off. The county police did all they could to trace the burglars, but without any result. Someone's cow had triplets: and someone else's daughter that had gone off to America ten years ago came home; and the Flaggons' fame looked like being short-lived when I left for home on the Saturday. I got my length of cloth, but it was so badly woven that I could not believe Tom had ever handled a loom before. Still, I could not be hard on him at such a time.

The rest of the story I owe to Timothy.

On Sunday evening my uncle and aunt were, of course, at church. Timothy was reading in my uncle's study which overlooks the garden. He was disturbed by a tap at the window. There was Tom Flaggon with something wrapped in sacking under his arm.

'Can I come in, sir?' Tom said huskily. 'I came up by the back,' he explained. 'I didn't want to be spotted with this here,' and he laid his bundle on the table. 'Janet she's in church,' he said with a chuckle.

Timothy looked at the bundle. It was rectangular and flat. 'Did you fake that burglary?' he said sternly.

Tom smiled disarmingly. 'You understand the way it is, sir,' he said. 'It was my picture. All these years I've had a fight to

get her to hang it on the wall. She didn't think a drinking-place was a proper thing to put in an oil-painting. But when it comes to selling and your friend coming from London, she was going to take the money and buy an an-ninuity—is it, sir? Three shillings a week spending money she said she'd give me. "That you won't, my lass," I thought to myself. What'd you've done, sir?"

Timothy had to laugh. 'And now what do you want me to do?' he asked.

'Well, there it is, sir.' Tom unwrapped the picture. 'It's for you to say, sir. It's for you to say. I don't want any gentlemen coming down here to look at it now, you see.'

'No,' agreed Timothy.

'So if you'd like to have it yourself and say nothing to Janet ——' Tom broke off expressively.

Timothy caught the old man's twinkling eye. Timothy is a rich man. He was proud of his judgment. He had not hoped to own the picture himself: its full market price was much beyond his pocket, but at seventy-five pounds, or even a hundred, he was tempted.

'I've not got much longer here, sir, but I'd like a bit of fun before I go. I hadn't hoped for it, I'll tell you. Fancy that crooked picture being worth all that. I'd never have thought it. And my old master used to paint lovely pictures, castles and baskets of fruit and ladies in fancy dress as natural as that cow there in the meadow. Not a penny could he get for one of them. Would it be worth a hundred pounds to you, sir? You'd make a bit on it: and I'd be rich for a chap like me. Three bob a week, Janet said she'd give me.'

Of course a hundred pounds safely hidden from his sister was a fortune to Tom. Timothy was tempted beyond resistance. If old Tom got even three hundred for the picture he would almost certainly kill himself with celebration before the money was spent. Timothy struck the bargain. To make Tom's deception of Janet easier Timothy got him the money in treasury notes next day. His conscience did not worry him. Janet's meanness justified a little sharp practice.

At least so he thought until he got his Van Gogh to London. Then several experts, separately and in chorus, told him that he had been swindled. He thought the first two critics were only trying to damn his picture to buy it cheaply. But the weight of opinion was too strong for him. Soon enough he heard of at least

three other spurious Van Goghs found in a cottage in Kent. The Flaggon's plot was nearly always the same. There was always a conspiracy between one or other and the victim himself, to keep skinflint Janet or wastrel Tom out of the money according to the victim's taste : and, of course, to keep expert criticism at a distance.

Their success must have made them reckless. They had never before planted one of the pictures on anyone actually staying in the village, a friend of the Rural Dean. Yet when Timothy and I went over the case against them we could see no hope of cornering them. After all, Timothy had been willing to do Janet out of more money than Tom had got from him. We gave it up. Tom could easily have claimed that no one but Timothy had ever said the picture was worth twopence. We did wonder where the supply of pictures came from and I thought I was going to find out when I happened, one day, to see Tom and Janet in London. The old village cobbler and his honey-selling sister were in the lounge of a well-known hotel, quite at their ease, enjoying cocktails with a sleek young man and a very arty-looking lady. But, unluckily, they saw me almost as soon as I saw them. Tom tapped his sleek friend's arm. They drained their glasses and were gone. Tom had recognised me in London clothes amongst a crowd. It was some small consolation to think that the old ruffian had to pretend to be more than half-blind as long as he was posing as a poor old cobbler.

A STAR DANCED—

My mother was fond of saying that I danced before I could walk.

Since I have brought up three babies of my own I have come to the conclusion that this remarkable phenomenon can be observed in most children. Tiny feet that are yet too feeble to support fat little bodies will often kick and jig in perfect time to a catchy tune. So my dear mother—like Maman Grenouille in Monsieur Franc-Nohan's delightful fable—had merely glorified in her offspring a quite ordinary trait of infancy.

Nevertheless, it is true that all my life I have had a passion for dancing; by which I do not mean the waltzes and polkas of my youth, though these were certainly great fun; I mean 'classical dancing,' as it used to be called.

At that time the Russian ballet had not come into its own, in England at any rate. But girls were taught 'skirt-dancing' as a matter of course, and also the so-called National Dances: the Irish Jig, the Hornpipe, the Spanish dance with castanets, the Highland Fling. One of my earliest recollections is of treading an intricate Scottish measure between the blades of two of my father's swords, crossed upon the floor. I was a very small person indeed, and I wore an extremely short dress of pale blue, 'accordion-pleated,' and heel-less shoes of blue silk to match. The occasion was a large evening party, and, as too frequently happened in those days, the electric light went out in the middle of the proceedings. My father's friend, Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon—so young and gay then—struck a match with great brio and held it to illuminate my little feet, arrested in their capers. *Eheu, fugaces*—I read of his death the other day; some ten years after the death of my father.

From my childhood until the War laid its shadow across my youth I studied dancing quite seriously, and I thought and dreamed about it more perhaps than anyone ever knew. This is, no doubt, the reason why the two most vivid impressions of those happy years are connected with that art.

The first of these memories is of Isadora Duncan. My mother saw her dance one day, without me. I think it was at a private house, probably under the auspices of Miss Elinor Hallé (the sister

of the famous musician), who first introduced her to the London public. She was so enthusiastic over the originality and grace of the performance that she seized the first opportunity of sharing her delight with me, her dance-mad child.

It must have been about the month of June, 1900. The Hallés arranged a 'recital' for Isadora at the New Gallery. It was an informal gathering in the big hall, and there were not enough seats even for that sparse audience; but this had its advantages, for I was allowed to sit on the ground at my mother's feet, in front of everybody else, and thus had a close and uninterrupted view.

A well-known Academician gave a preliminary address. This imposing bearded personage—in appearance a veritable Jove—was perhaps not as talented a speaker as he was a painter. At any rate I, in my irreverent teens, had some trouble in restraining a giggle when the majestic orator declared, with the air of one making a revelation:

'Botticelli's Primavera is, if I may say so—at least so it appears to me—a perfect expression of the spirit of—er—Spring.'

The recital itself was a thing of beauty. Isadora danced a Bacchanal: wild, languorous, pagan creature, the very breath of ancient Greece seemed all about her. I remember a recurrent passage in the measure, when she raised her arm above her thrown-back head, in a fluid rippling gesture, as though crushing invisible grapes into her mouth from a high-flung vine. I thought I saw those grapes.

My mother looked across me at my father and said to him, in the mixed language they used to one another:

'I would not like our child to dance that dance. *C'est vraiment trop bachique!*'

Sweet blindness of maternal love! That art was, naturally, as far above me as that of Terpsichore.

In the item named 'After Botticelli's Primavera'—so illuminatingly preluded by the renowned painter—Isadora impersonated, one after the other, all the figures in that full canvas. Now, head inclined and hand uplifted, she was the pensive Spring herself; then, with draperies billowing round her bounding limbs, she was the Zephyr; again she glided through the exquisite postures of the Three Graces in their rondo. I can still hear in memory the soft swish of her bare feet on the marble pavement.

This blending of two arts, this translating into lovely movement of a masterpiece of medieval painting, was to me a revelation. It

'haunted me like a passion.' Seeing me thus enthusiastic, my dear indulgent mother determined to ask Isadora to give me some lessons.

The request so confidently formulated met with a rebuff. Mrs. Duncan, a stout, elderly lady of rather alarming mien and pronounced American accent, informed us that 'Dora did not teach, she only danced.' But there was still hope for me. Isadora had a sister, who was organising classes. She would instruct me in 'technique.'

On a hot summer's day I had my first lesson. The 'classes' were held in a ball-room of the Kensington Palace Hotel. There was a pianist in attendance, but I cannot recollect that there was ever any other pupil but myself. My instructress—Elizabeth Bioren Duncan was her name—was the dearest, quaintest, cleverest little creature in the world. She was quite unlike Isadora, being small and brown and gentle, with large, liquid dark eyes, and ringlets of soft brown hair hanging in bunches over her ears—she was really not unlike a nice little spaniel. She was a study in brown, for she always wore a coffee-coloured silk dancing-dress, made very short and full in the skirt, with silk stockings and flat shoes of exactly the same tone.

Isadora was not present, but the mother of these gifted daughters sat majestically on a sofa, and entertained my mother with anecdotes of 'Dora,' and also with panegyrics of her son, who had, I think, accompanied the family to England.

'Oh, Mrs. Egerton Castle, that is a Bright Boy!'

Through all these years that absurd phrase still echoes in my memory, though I heard it with but one ear, so to speak, through the chords of Miss Elizabeth Bioren Duncan's pianist.

The lessons were wonderful. She made me realise how movement must invade my whole being, from the poise of the head through the poise of the body, running like a current down the limbs, even to the tips of the fingers. All must be fluent, expressive. This being a nature-school, *tours de force* were rigorously excluded. The tip-toes of the ballet were condemned; the ball of the foot was alone created to carry the human body, so declared my mistress, adducing in support of her theory the classic frieze and the medieval painting. It was also a Duncan axiom never to stand squarely on both feet. One leg alone should bear the whole weight; the other leg, gracefully bent at the knee, should rest lightly on the side of the foot. It makes me smile now when I recall

that for many years I never stood otherwise than in this affected attitude which became second nature.

What a different ideal from that of our present-day athletic young people!

The exercises which Miss Elizabeth taught me were alike beautiful in themselves and a splendid training for the dance. They were principally arm exercises, though the whole frame had of course to participate in them to a certain extent, according to her inviolable rule.

I remember four of them, all founded on nature mimicry. The first and easiest was called the 'Fern-frond.' The pupil stood quite straight (for once!) with each arm curled closely upon the chest, the fingers rounded inwards on the palm, the outer edge of the wrists resting against each other. The head was bent down over the folded hands. Then the frond began to grow. To the sound of soft music the head was raised, slowly, steadily. Miss Elizabeth bade me feel how the muscles tightened at the back of my neck during this action, as each section of my vertebræ played its part. Slowly, steadily, the chin was tilted, the eyes looked up. Meanwhile the arms began to move; they unfolded, always softly rounded; they rose above the head, stretched high; then, last of all, the fingers uncurled, straight to the very tips. Delicately must the movement flow, without a jerk, without an angle anywhere. The whole body remained thus a second or two, straining upwards, like a plant towards the sun.

Another exercise was named 'Tree Branches in a Wind.' As before, the feet remained still, while the body took on a swaying motion, accompanied by a rhythmic waving of the arms, and a peculiar dip and flutter of the wrists.

'The Waves' was perhaps the most difficult. Arms, wrists and fingers, stretched out at right angles to the body, had to assume a ribbon-like suppleness, and movement rippled along them, now deep and rolling like a stormy swell, now light and quick like a quiet sea.

'The Bird' brought the feet at last into play. The arms were extended in front, palm to palm, the hands faintly fluttering; then the action widened, the arms waving softly at first, then spreading out each side like wings, and beating ever stronger, till somehow, by the very force of suggestion, the dancer glided away in a floating measure, so airy, so free, that it really gave the performer the illusion of flight.

Such was the technique taught by Miss Duncan. After this, the student was supposed to compose her own dances.

The day came when I was pronounced fit for this promotion. Classic music was played to me. I executed some steps, but remained, I must confess, singularly uninspired.

My mother was sitting watching me, her long, full mauve silk skirts billowing round her, her large hat shadowing a good deal of disapproval in her eyes.

'Don't you think it might be better to teach my daughter a dance?' she observed at length. 'I don't believe she will ever be able to compose one for herself.'

This was treading on sacred ground. Elizabeth Bioren flushed all over her dark little face. The small sandalled foot stamped indignantly.

'Absolutely *No*, Mrs. Egerton Castle!' quoth she.

The soft American accent gave an added piquancy to the passionate refusal.

I was very much embarrassed at the time, but afterwards I was grateful to my inexorable little mistress. It is easy enough to teach a child to use its feet; she taught me to use my brain. In the end I really did evolve something original.

The great rule was that every dance must have a meaning, must tell a story. The first which I invented for myself, under Miss Elizabeth's goad, was intended to represent Persephone, new-risen from Hades, gathering flowers in the joy of Spring's return. This was performed to the accompaniment of Mendelssohn's *Melody* in F. It strikes me now that it was a dreadful solecism, thus to mix one's styles; but my intrepid mentor was quite pleased.

Afterwards I made a *Swallow Dance*, and a dance with veils, which I called '*Tanagra*.'

In the autumn the Duncan family went back to America, and I was left to dream and practise by myself.

I never saw Elizabeth Bioren again, but my mother and I were assiduous spectators when in after years Isadora returned to the London stage. This time she, who had refused to teach me, appeared with a children's ballet—her '*school*.' We were entranced by these little creatures: elves, sprites, butterflies, bits of thistledown—to what could one compare them? They floated and flew through their scenes; an infant Cupid pursued a tiny Psyche; flowery children swayed hand in hand, like a garland.

Every one of them was instinct with fun and merriment ; it was the embodiment of eternal youth.

Isadora danced with them. That was the apogee of her art ; in her fairy school she had created a thing of perfect beauty.

Then her fate swept her away ; a stormy, lurid existence that was to end in fearful tragedy.

Pavlova dawned upon us, and straightway we forgot Isadora. Poor Isadora, said the fickle public, she is growing a little heavy ! Pavlova was—and remained till her dying day—a delicate Ariel. As a cousin of mine observed to me during one of her performances at the Palace Theatre, in the hey-day of her glory : 'She is so fine, she could slip through a ring !'

The old fairy-tale simile was delightfully apt in her case.

She was, to my mind, the greatest dancer I ever saw, for, while possessing to perfection all the technique of the ballet, she endowed it with a poetry and a spirituality entirely her own. Praise concerning her seems almost trite ; for those who had the joy of watching her in such creations as the Dying Swan, the Bacchanale, and Gisèle can never forget her.

It was in 1910 that we were, for a brief moment, in touch with this exquisite artist. My grandmother, Mrs. Castle, gave a reception in the June of that summer, and being anxious to offer a perfect entertainment to her guests, she deputed my father to negotiate an engagement with Pavlova.

She received my father in her dressing-room at the Palace Theatre on a day of rehearsal. She must at that time have been about twenty-three years of age. He described her to us as grave and pale ; the delicate oval face was innocent of the least trace of make-up, her hair was parted and smoothly banded over her ears. She sat with her slim hands folded in her lap, the image of complete repose, while she discussed with him the details of her programme.

When everything was settled, she had an afterthought which touched my father.

'I think your mother is an old lady,' said she, with her pretty Russian accent ; 'I will have my dresses lengthened.'

She was better than her word, for it was in entirely new and very discreet costumes that she appeared at my grandmother's party.

The hostess herself was indeed a personality deserving all the gracious consideration shown her by the artist. Tall, erect and

slight, in spite of her more than four-score years, she seemed, in her grey and silver brocade, with a white lace mantilla over her snowy hair, to have stepped out of a picture. And her manners were those of her epoch. There are no longer any real old ladies nowadays ; when I remember my grandmother, I think that is a great pity.

A theatre had been built out on the leads at the back of the house ; seats rose, tier upon tier, from the stage at the far end to the dining-room balcony. The improvised roof being higher than the first floor, the windows of the house served as boxes for specially privileged guests, while the rest of us sat in the stalls.

To reach the stage it was necessary for the dancers to pass down the centre gangway between the seats ; an arrangement which was perhaps inconvenient for them but exceedingly interesting to the audience. We thus saw Pavlova quite close ; she came tripping down the balcony steps from the house, her flying draperies brushing against the outer ranks of the spectators. She looked like a shy bird ; her smooth dark head turned this way and that, in pretty, deprecating greeting. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as she fluttered up to the platform.

Her partner in those days was Mordkin, a splendid youth with the limbs of a Greek god, and the lithe swiftness of some wild and woodland creature. Rumour had it that he was fathoms deep in love with Pavlova—as well he might be !—while she, untouched—intangible indeed it seemed—just smiled and went her way. Many people will remember how in those exits into the wings of the Palace Theatre, after their inimitable numbers together, Mordkin would crush kisses on the ballerina's slender fingers, that lay so coolly, so nonchalantly, in his. Part of the play ? Perhaps. But I, being then romantic, felt sure it was infinitely more than that. It was also rumoured that Mordkin's baffled love turned at last to a dark resentment, and that this was the reason for the dissolution of their artistic partnership. I never thought Pavlova's ensemble effects were quite so perfect after he left.

I have a vivid memory of Mordkin that night ; he ran quickly down the gangway between the rows of spectators, his strong young limbs emerging, spare and lissom and muscular, from his fluttering short tunic, a fillet round his head. As he ran he made rapid signs of the Cross on brow and bosom, hurriedly, agitatedly, like a frightened peasant. He must have 'crossed himself' ten times at least before he leapt upon the stage. There all nervous-

ness seemed at once to leave him, and he turned a wide and merry smile upon the audience, as he sprang and bounded through his measures. He mimed a hunting scene, with a bow and arrow, which was a marvel of athletic grace.

The pair performed their most beautiful dances that night; among others the Bacchanale, wherein Pavlova seemed a fluttering leaf and he the wind that tossed the leaf. It was like some survival from the primeval youth of the world. She floated through the Chopin valse, under a blue light; she enacted, with her infinite pathos, the Dying Swan.

Thinking of it all now, a sadness comes upon me. There was always, it is true, a little mist of melancholy about Pavlova, even when her dancing seemed most joyous, as if she knew that her life would not be a long one and that all this glory was but lent her for a short while. Looking back, it almost seems as though doom already shadowed these two brilliant creatures. When Pavlova lay on her untimely death-bed, she asked in her delirium for her swan dress, and the agonised beating of the failing wings which we watched with such admiration that summer night twenty-one years ago was her last earthly gesture.

And Mordkin? Is he still alive, I wonder? Or did the Red catastrophe submerge that typical child of a sad, spirited, passionate race?

MARIE-LOUISE DE MEEUS.

THE YOUTH OF A CHILDREN'S MAGAZINE.

AN EDITORIAL RETROSPECT.¹

UNTIL a few months ago, the offices in which I edited children's magazines for thirty years were always to be found in the same small recondite Square in the City of London. The Square is a kind of rectilinear maze, such as I liked to contrive on paper when I was a boy. It can be reached only by narrow one-way traffic lanes and half-secret footpaths under archways. When you attain what should be its midst, you find a square within the Square. The central space was open till about seventy years ago, when it was a sub-market to Smithfield, for the meat trade. This accounts for a public-house in one corner and two others in the connecting by-ways, for to-day's commerce in the Square includes only two industries, each of the greatest quiet discretion—the book trade and the display of linoleum. But in the early 'sixties came the interior block, exactly proportioned to the outer, but itself subdivided into four little squares by rectangular cross-passages, each with a built-over archway. It is as elusive as Todgers's and as neat as a Chinese nest of boxes.

It is impossible, for economic reasons, either to build huge new offices in such an inaccessible spot or (the better alternative) to afforest it. It retains always, therefore, something of its semi-domestic Victorian atmosphere: a compromise between continuous quiet efficiency and mere adhesion. It is the obvious natural home of children's magazines of the staid sort, and there *The Magazine*, among many rivals, was cradled and grew to its present maturity.

Upon such a Square, an hour or so after offices are normally closed, there falls a gentlemanly peace, as of a suburban drawing-room about 3 p.m. on Sundays. 'The very city seems asleep.' The postman slamming the pillar-box door, the faint cackle of women with pails, the shuffle of a vast City policeman testing

¹ The magazines of which I write are still in existence. It would be improper of me to advertise them against their many rivals by dwelling on their well-established fame. It would be equally improper to suggest that my own retirement involves any breach of continuity. I have therefore given fictitious names throughout. 'The trade' and a few readers will probably recognise certain facts, but without, I hope, thinking the worse of my late products or of myself. —F. J. H. D.

locks, have each an echo all the more distinct after the roarings of huddled contorted traffic throughout the working day. A mellowness slides into the soul. I felt that my sometimes absurd labours were really benign, if not important, as, after staying late one spring evening a year or two ago, I clanged a heavy door behind me and almost ran into a man who was peering about oddly. 'Aren't the offices of *The — Magazine* here?' he asked. He was soberly well-dressed, in a rather countrified fashion. 'I've come twelve thousand miles to see them.'

I revealed my guilt as editor, and, to cut the story of a long and friendly encounter short, learnt that he had been brought up on my senior magazine, had cherished memories of the serial stories loved by him before he emigrated to New Zealand in the late 'seventies, and had firmly resolved to visit, upon his first return to 'home,' the actual nursery of this dear and (he was kind enough to say) beneficial joy. We parted good friends, and several months later I received a most amiable letter from his son, the editor of a well-known Dominion newspaper.

Somewhere about the same time the creator of *Peter Pan* laid bare his soul. Years ago that soul was a dreadful place. Its tabernacle had read dozens of penny dreadfuls, and, still worse, had written imitations of them. But *The — Magazine* purged him. Vice fled. He buried the lot, originals and copies, in the back garden. Yet what my New Zealand friend, as honest and ingenuous a man as I ever met, had loved in this same magazine was a long story called 'The Gold Diggers of Redville'—something like it, anyhow; a tale of the Californian gold rush, nearly as rapid as a film of to-day. What is more perplexing, I have learnt that a well-known nature writer was sustained and inspired by Us (I speak editorially) to high adventure; that an equally well-known playwright, in a successful comedy acted by all amateurs, pilloried *The — Magazine* as 'stuff for kids'; and that a new and rising novelist of this very year thought that so recently as 1913 We produced nothing but mawkish sentiment of two kinds—*Eric, or Little by Little*, in the upper class, 'daddy-dear-do-keep-off-the-drink' in the lower: deathbeds, anyway, as formerly displayed in 1660 and 1860 for the betterment of evil brats.

The fact is, *The — Magazine* had become a household word; and a household word is often a wholesale lie. No children's magazine, and very few children's books, ever really existed on this earth. They lived only in a Platonic ideal reality in the

heavens, and every inhabitant of the Den saw and still sees only such a projection of them as his enslaved adult mind can comprehend. I myself, though an editor ought to be at least the peer of a Platonic guardian, have fallen to this pathetic fallacy. I simply adored, years ago, *The Swiss Family Robinson*; especially the passage about the donkey visible inside the serpent. But I never knew till about 1925, when I examined the work for trade purposes, that it was stiff with prayers and piety. 'The One remains, the Many change and pass'; and, oddly enough, the residue in children's literature is usually the last thing upon which an author prided himself or for which he had a hopeful purpose.

Solid old goodwill; preconceptions not to be disturbed; a sane and honest ideal to be maintained; new conditions of thought and of practical mechanism—that was the inheritance into which I stepped when, about 1901, I became editor of *The — Magazine* and a twin production meant for younger readers. The Victorian era had just ended, as years go. A turning-point had come for many magazines founded in the eighteen-sixties at the heyday of the wood-block. They had to change as vivaciously as the fashions in dress changed. Their conductors heard a new language being spoken, a little like their own, but not the same; just as maybe Shakespeare's folk might recognise vaguely our clipped version of their broader speech. The aims of *The — Magazine*, among others, had become almost shadowy, the ghost of an ancient cause now won or lost, but at any rate no longer inspiring. Where were we? Even our outward fabric was changing. The Bluecoat School had just been turned into a kind of Aladdin's palace and wafted to Horsham. The Old Bailey was to be broken down. What would happen to our Square and its coeval enterprises? Had we passed our climacteric? Why did we exist?

Why indeed? Perhaps few remembered the truth. The old name, itself wearing an obsolescent air, stood now for affectionate memory, not for policy. But Barrie was right. The journal had set out heavy with purpose. In 1866, an able vicar in the provinces, much devoted to work among his younger parishioners, felt the need of healthy literature to combat blood-and-thunder, which, like many reformers then and now, he deemed a menace to juvenile civilisation. He resolved to meet the want himself. He collected a few friends to provide him with literary matter—he had a ready-enough pen himself; and he got into touch—how, I do not know, and it really is an odd mystery—with a very competent London

engraver and blockmaker, a Mr. James. Both were tolerably well-to-do, and between them they put up several thousand pounds. It is certain that Mr. James had no particular religious motive. But he was a good honest business man, and so, for that matter, was Mr. Osborne, the Yorkshire vicar; and they conspired amicably and efficiently enough.

But an engraver in London and an editorial clergyman a long way off could not do all the work. Mr. James could look after the practical side of the illustrations, but a working manager was needed to deal with artists, paper-makers, binders, advertising agents, even the wretched tribe of authors. For this purpose Mr. James discovered an odd but capable man, a Mr. Mullins, who, as if to add to the magazine's religious breadth, was a Roman Catholic. He was an engineer by profession, of a roving type; and I am told that when he received Mr. James's offer, he had just landed in Liverpool in some financial straits, after adventures in South America suitable to that period of history. With him came his assistant, Mr. Butcher, a confidential factotum who was always something of a mystery. He is still living, in retirement, and I will only say of him that, alongside some unimportant defects, he possessed a most extraordinary memory and a remarkable sense of what the peculiar public of *The — Magazine* would like. It is not unfair to support this opinion. In my own time, it was one of his duties to enter the titles of our illustrations in a register. We were then strong on what I might call moral or artistic 'close-ups.' We had a series of 'Bible Characters,' among them Queen Candace of Ethiopia. The artist's writing was not very clear, and this rather nebulous monarch appeared in our books as 'Queen Canaan of Utopia'—queen of at least two fortunate worlds. Another series included a reproduction of Franz Hals' 'Laughing Cavalier.' This was recorded as 'Fancy Hats,' a title so happy that I was sorely tempted to adopt it as the 'motto,' or lettering under the published picture. On the other hand, if Mr. Butcher provided diversion of this kind, he could have told me, twenty years after, in what month of what year Queen Canaan first astonished our public, without ever looking it up; and not less unerringly he would point out that such-and-such an anecdote, deemed new in 1910, had appeared in our pages in almost the same words in 1879.

His particular religion was not discovered to me; but he was Conservative in politics. Nor did I ask the religious beliefs of

our printer, though I can say with sincerity that he was a man of good, simple and devout life, and that, as his was one of the earliest 'Union houses,' he knew what labour problems were. His old-established firm printed our magazines for over sixty years without a break, except for a short interval when their premises were burnt down and the printers of *Punch* kindly came to the rescue—for by that time, a dozen years after its inception, *The — Magazine* in its humbler way had become an institution like *Punch* itself. Mr. S— was as enthusiastic a reader of the paper as those for whom he printed it. He died after a few years, but his son, who passed away in 1930 at a great age, was equally devoted. He indeed was a distinguished and lovable gentleman, utterly wrapped up in his ancient profession, very sensitive of its honour. He had a shy, nervous manner that seemed sometimes almost irritability, but was in reality a delicate enthusiasm. He communicated his zeal and courtesy to his men, who all through took a pride in their work, as good printers do. They would bring us the damp sheets, 'made ready,' to be passed before printing, with a mixture of anxiety and affection in their air which no machine-setter can ever quite display (until a few years ago the magazine was always hand-set). 'Too much ink there, but that block don't print up proper without you ink it well. The black's too heavy for it—the ink almost pulls the surface off the paper. Would you have it back, please, to be gone over before we print for the vols.?' To them the monthly issue was routine; but 'the vols.'—the annual volumes—were a typographical trust.

Finally, even in those days of simpler distributive methods, the publishing had to be in the hands of a competent organisation. The founders discovered a man who issued a good many pious tracts, and booklets not out of keeping with their ideals. I never knew him. But I gather that he was not really fond of *The — Magazine*. He was a Dissenter, harmless but convinced; and though Mr. Osborne's Anglicanism for children was not in the least militant, the old village church and the good vicar certainly did turn up pretty frequently. When, therefore, about 1870, the energetic junior partner in another firm bid for the publishing, he secured it. He not only came into close contact with the management, but he brought yet another point of view into the general outlook, for he came of old Quaker stock, and was an ardent Churchman, inclining to High, but not fanatically.

With such allies and officers, then, Mr. Osborne was to lead his

crusade to rescue tempted adolescence—the boy and girl of fourteen or so, especially those who had to make their own living. The first weekly number of *The — Magazine* appeared on December 1, 1866, at the price of one halfpenny. It was also issued monthly, at threepence, as from January 1, 1867; and in the autumn of 1867, in good time for the Christmas-book trade which Dickens and Thackeray had established as a matter of business routine, the first annual volume appeared, and was immediately and hurriedly reprinted. Within a year or two it had acquired a large oversea market, especially in the United States. It is significant of a general social change that in recent years America has lost much of the children's-magazine and Christmas-volume habit. The newspapers on the one hand, the host of cheap new books on the other, have deprived the publication-day of juvenile periodicals of nearly all its old excitement and innocent warmth.

That first volume, now very rare, would surprise the grandfathers who to-day look back to it, as I have said, with memory only of what struck their imagination. In spite of the mixture of interests in the band of producers, Mr. Osborne dominated the magazine. He went beyond his explicit ideal of supplying good stuff to oust bad by the strength of mere excellence. What he was really anxious about was not so much the making of young criminals as the possible diminution of young Christians. He was ready and able to provide plenty of healthy, robust adventure, such as my New Zealand *revenant* had loved. But when it came to the seething pot of print, he flavoured the excitement—I fear 'larded' is nearly the right word—with an intolerable deal of aggressive piety; so that *The — Magazine* could almost (not quite, I think, for I was forbidden it myself) be read in the sombre peace, the devout restraint, of the mid-Victorian Sunday.

Mr. Osborne's editing of the text was masterly; nay, masterful. Few contributors were allowed a signature, few even initials.¹ The editor himself took—usurped—all responsibility of every kind, even of authorship. He *did* edit. W. E. Henley was not more savage nor more painstaking. If a story contained a good idea with poor trimmings, Mr. Osborne cut the trimmings away bodily, or re-wrote them. To make his views prevail, he added as well as took away. A famous Civil Service legend tells how a high official

¹ After the first few months, though Mr. Osborne's original associates were naturally favoured, the magazine depended almost entirely upon chance contributions from outside. It has done so ever since. It never had any literary staff.

of the Home Office, checking the draft of the King's Speech one year, wrote on it the minute, 'Some reference to A. G. should come in about here.' He ought to have been the first editor of *The — Magazine*. It is not for me, in these discreet pages, to interpret the symbol 'A. G.': I will only say that in the nineteenth century our volume contained most strepitant morals.

Contributors had no say in the matter. The point as well as the length of their MSS. lay entirely in the editor's hands, and he was a ruthless surgeon. He was marvellously ingenious in hiding the wounds, but I think many a writer must have deemed his baby a changeling when he saw it in print—which was only after publication, for no proofs were sent; in fact, acceptance or rejection was often not notified. Yet there were, I gather, few unanswerable complaints. Besant and *The Author* were not yet heard of. Mr. Osborne's moral standpoint was widely held, and writers who shared it were quick to find their market. And, almost *ex hypothesi*, the editor of a children's magazine is in a peculiar position of trust and vigilance. Certainly I cannot defend my predecessor's practices unreservedly. But frankly, after reading many thousands of 'juvenile' MSS.—unprinted—and observing the kind of people who compose about ninety per cent. of them, I am charitable enough to understand Mr. Osborne's holy ferocity and very nearly to excuse it. There is much to be said for Herod's abrupt manner of dealing with the songs of innocence.

Such vigilance, naturally, led to unconscious humour. It is all very well to justify the ways of God to man. It is no doubt true, also, in a philosophical sense, that virtue is its own reward. But if you took our pages from 1867 to 1897 as evidence, you found some singular phenomena adduced in support of such views. It is clear, for instance, that London contained an abnormal number of shivering crossing-sweepers and errand boys toiling to 'win a crust.' Day in, day out, they just won it. To that end, they did good deeds with the self-effacing persistence of a Boy Scout, and even less conspicuously, for they had no uniform. Bare feet, open-necked shirts, and rags—through which a spotlessly clean elbow *had* to be displayed by the artist—were much in vogue at that date, and, unfortunately, excited little attention. But in the end the crumb was added to the crust (I wonder why crusts were thought so nasty). Sooner or later a manly bearing or the very exceptional quality of honesty in a poor child caught the eye of a long-lost uncle or of a peppery old philanthropist with a soft

(even sodden) heart and a full purse. And then you realised that in *The — Magazine*, at any rate, virtue was never its own sole reward.

The maintenance of a code at once so strait and so fluid involved great care over details, especially those of expression and even of spelling. Oaths, naturally, could not be admitted—hardly hinted at, except in the form of a 'string,' or 'stream,' 'rapped out' with no more definiteness than those stock phrases imply; and even that vague latitude was only conceded to very wicked persons, like drunkards, poachers, or exceptionally flashy young clerks engaged in embezzlement. This caution went to extremes, and banished words like 'hang,' 'dash,' and 'blow' (W. S. Gilbert knew it); while 'rotten' and 'what rot' were much too coarse for insertion. What, in those dim days, when 'awful' nearly was an awful thing to say, would have been thought of our schoolboy 'putrid' and 'stinking'? And, if slang was harmful, how much the more noxious might not contractions be? Suppose the apostrophe slipped out of 'he'll,' or even of 'can't?' The resultant word in the one case was wicked; in the other—well, it might recoil on the Editor. But that was not such an absurd fear as it seems, because *The — Magazine* was used as a 'reader' in schools, and 'she'll,' 'we're' were real stumbling-blocks in sight-reading. 'He'll,' however, remained anathema on moral grounds. Not ten years ago I had a letter myself—from a moral-sense American—protesting against its very appearance (misprinted, of course) in a children's magazine. Our language may have been stilted, but it was never bad.

Other inhibitions and prohibitions had a basis broader than strict morality. Ghost stories were excluded altogether. When my turn came, I tried the insertion of one or two which depended on a forewarned sheet-and-turnip practical joke. Even so, in my young days as an editor, I felt bound to put in a mild warning about the danger of such feigned terrors. And I soon learnt the risk, for I received several complaints that nervous children had been seriously upset by what I deemed mild fun. I went back to Mr. Osborne's hard-and-fast rule. I never broke another he had set up—to debar murder entirely. I am as fond of fictitious corpses as any man; as I am, in an Elian sense, of the artificial comedy of the eighteenth century. But I think they may well be left to problem-solvers and to those who have a tincture of the more humane letters, which readers of children's magazines have

not. Such journals have no need to meddle with what is 'news value' at the Old Bailey.

Fairy-tales also Mr. Osborne ostracised, ostensibly (in the Puritan spirit) because they were impossible, but quite as much, he told me, because of the difficulty of keeping up the standard of such work, if you once admitted modern specimens. Every garrulous governess who ever lived thinks she can write a fairy-tale; and she cannot. Experience converted me inflexibly to this half of Mr. Osborne's policy. It is a question of editorial self-defence, as avoiding being preached to death by wild curates is to the episcopacy.

So passed the 'sixties and the 'seventies, the Gladstonian 'eighties and the Yellerbocky 'nineties; and with the death of the great Queen who had overshadowed our lives in a way people under forty to-day cannot comprehend, Mr. (by then Canon) Osborne laid down his blue pencil. He died, full of years and honour, in 1920, after the jubilee of his creation had been celebrated in its pages by the revelation of his features—*cut in wood* from a painting by a not undistinguished artist. I think that was the last new wood-block we used.

I was inexperienced enough—though Mr. Mullins, Mr. Butcher, and the printer and publisher were there to help me—when I succeeded him in 1901, but not so impatient as to begin to let off fireworks in the parlour as soon as Victoria was buried. Sudden transformation, abrupt modernisation, would be as dangerous and useless financially as blowing up our Square to build skyscrapers. Inevitability had to be gradual. And, practical efficiency apart, a magazine so blandly benevolent could not get rid of all its old contributors at one swoop. Most of the authors and artists were still living in the thought of the 'seventies, at latest, and must go; but they could not be kicked downstairs in a crowd.

The authors were not difficult to treat considerately. I could always say, for it was always true, from 1901 to 1931, that there was far too much unused material on hand for me to accept many new MSS. for some time to come; a time which was like the jam in *Alice*—never to-day. With one or two lingering exceptions, the writers had not met Canon Osborne personally, and I could make sure they would never meet me. They lived in different parts of the country, and did not know one another. I hope, therefore, they never guessed that I was telling them all alike, with fell

purpose, the same story of repletion. At that time the free-lance world had not such a good intelligence system as to-day.

They are all dead now, and anyhow I was not openly cruel to their loyal efforts. They were only out of date. . . . Not that my secret purge made much difference, for a good time to come. The schoolmaster in Rutland who every month used to submit about a hundred moral or facetious or moral-facetious anecdotes merely made his period two months instead of one, and I on my part accepted only five instead of twenty. (Juvenile magazines suffer from a permanent *bulimy* or ox-hunger for short 'fill-ups.') The chemist and druggist of Nether Wallop found more often than before that his little articles on 'Curious Birds' Nests' or 'How Pins are Made' had 'recently been anticipated by another contributor.' The short-story writer who had for so many years produced sobs about angel-faces and model-schoolboys was met with a slight change in the type, which got only 500 words into a column instead of 600—and she could not cut her emotions down even to that extent, as I had expected. So they faded, with goodwill on both sides. Euthanasia.

I filled their place from the deathless host of free-lances. It was quite simple. It was necessary only to do without emphasis on the moral, and to be firm about certain exclusions—cripples, for instance, and garrets, frank manly faces and the general 'Eric' paraphernalia. There was no need to substitute for them dripping bowie-knives or triumphant low schoolboy cunning. I encouraged a few casual novices who showed signs of having read something later than Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, Belzoni's *Travels*, and 'Peter Parley.' I asked one or two to look out for odds and ends in the Edwardian daily papers, rather than in the very back files of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and to suggest subjects for illustration which they could themselves 'write up.' For the longer serials I even ventured to approach agents, though I asked for nothing definite. I did, indeed, think of persuading some obviously promising young authors to try their hand at the R. L. Stevenson business; and they did so, and their efforts, published a little later in book form, are now 'collectors' books.' But neither their growing fame nor the intrinsic worth of their tales made a difference of a dozen copies in our sales. We were established: our name was our advertisement. What had to be done was to wear sober new clothes, not the fashions of the day before yesterday nor the expected extravagances of to-morrow.

The real obstacle to progress was the illustrations. Most of the artists and engravers were wont to hold almost daily traffic with the manager, and it was convenient that I should enter into this, as I worked at the office and not at home. Thus, instead of doing as Mr. Osborne had, and marking a proof or MS. 'Full page: page 3'; 'Half page: "*She turned abruptly*": N.B. her sleeve must be torn'; 'Full page: "*the dog leapt at him*"; tell Mr. X—to make it a real terrier, not a woolly bear,' or words to those effects, and sending it on to Mr. Mullins to 'give out,' I used to meet the artists in the flesh, and go into critical details, and discuss them also with the block-makers.

Their ghosts seem to stand before me to this day: meagre wraiths who knew not that they were even then dead. Heaven knows, they might long ago have set out briskly for a gleaming horizon, free, careless draughtsmen who thought their pencil could make vivid all the kaleidoscope of life. But there was nothing gay or Bohemian about them now. The end of their dream, their period, was settling upon them, and they were waking to know it in their old age. Only one of those I met survives to-day, and he, through his cheerful adaptability and his stout North Country heart, has won a modest ease in retirement. The rest are as forgotten as their work, which seemed so apposite, almost so fresh, sixty years back.

Yet even in their twilight they had a kind of forlorn shrivelled grandeur. They were not the Millais's, the Boyd Houghtons, the Pinwells of the Victorian woodcut era, nor had they Dalziels or Swains now to reproduce their work. But they possessed the sincerity and thoroughness of that epoch. They lacked only imagination: they were void even of complacency. They offered instead a kind of doglike pains-taking, a simple fidelity such as they were wont to put into their innumerable drawings of pet animals. Some of them, it struck my young imperfect sympathy, had an almost Landseer appeal in their very look and mien. I remember well old Mr. Slender, who could draw with an infinite fineness every hair on a monkey's coat or a kitten's tail. He had desiccated the free splendour of Bewick's woodcutting, and used the mere sawdust of his own contemporaries. But he came into our office, with his long Du Maurier moustache white but still luxuriant, as if Don Quixote had been his ancestor and Captain Costigan (I fear) no very distant kinsman.

And Mr. Francis. He was the dirtiest artist I ever met. Not

that his person was either untidy or unpleasant. In fact, I am not sure that 'dirty' is a just epithet. He simply didn't wash himself clean. It is an idle fancy, but somehow I associated this with his great failing as a draughtsman—his complete inability to draw noses. He was one of our 'figure-subject' artists, and, except that he portrayed the last fashion but three, and of a lower-middle-class stratum at that, he was trustworthy—save for noses. His children picking blackberries or finding a thrush's nest (stock situations) always wore boot-buttons in the middle of their faces, after the manner of politicians in some modern caricatures. It occurred to me that he spent so much time over the other details—the foliage, the distant kine, the spire lit by the westering ray—that, just as he forgot to wash his face, so he overlooked the noses, and put them in as a hasty piece of last-minute routine. It did not matter, once I had observed his weakness. He drew only in wash upon wood, so that a direction to the skilled engraver readily brought some modelling into the round blobs of putty. Wood-cutting had its practical convenience; and he died before the wood-block vanished entirely from cheap popular magazines. He always offered a picture as 'a priddy liddle thing I'd like to show you.' His works, or their like, still lurk, in colour, in Parish Almanacs, or, in black and white, in one or two Parish Magazine 'centres.'

I could recall others, like Mr. Layne, who drew burglars (apprehended, of course, by unselfish Katie who had stayed at home), Philip Sidneys, drummer-boys, Old London, Good but not Clever Wilfrids, dying ducks in thunderstorms, with equal versatility, speed, and lumpiness—poor man, he needed the money badly for internal use; or Mr. Speedwell, who had illustrated some of the minor Mid-Victorian novelists, and even in 1900 or so could be trusted to produce knights and ladies and horsemen in the Sir John Gilbert manner, but less gallantly; or a few who acquired the new technique of drawing for direct 'line' reproduction and half-tone, and then, after adapting themselves, were found not to draw well or spiritedly enough—they, whose spirit was numb. But it was the engravers who made me conscious of the altered world; that magazine world whose seismic changes between 1860 and 1900 I had not experienced, as they had, by close ordeal.

I came into a queer intimacy with them. They were the last survivors of the *Illustrated London News* foundation.¹ Our Mr.

¹ One at least in actual fact, I believe; but I use that honoured name generically, as a matter of history, and without diminishing my respect for a magazine to-day younger than ever. The *News* not only made history but lives it.

James was dead, and though I could pick up a good deal from Mr. Mullins and the publisher and the printer, I could not pretend to argue with the engravers on technical points. Pretend I did, however, and since they had much at stake in those changing times, they helped me generously and threw in pretences of their own—as, that I knew better than they did, or that their faint hint had been my original suggestion. They were glad, too, after climbing our steep stairs, to sit down and talk about old and new times and how (most valuable to me) so-and-so had got his effects. I absorbed the atmosphere, and it soon became easy for me to say, for instance, to gentle old Mr. Stacey, who grew more and more like Father Christmas every day, 'Could you take out the "stops" there?' or '*Enter that, I think, Mr. Stacey*'; so that his still deft and steady hand could take out in a trice some infinitesimal coarseness which in printing would turn fine shades into a motley of small blots. I was sorry when one day his daughter came shyly with a half-finished block which he would never complete, and asked if we could possibly pay full price for it; and yet glad, for if he had lived, before long we should have had to be paying him no price at all, or so rarely that it would come to the same thing.

I felt less compassionate towards Mr. Poins. He was almost a joke—a kind of Falstaff turned conjurer—and valiantly he accepted the character. He had something of Chaucer's Pardoner in him, too, in his india-rubber versatility. He was certainly the cleverest engraver I ever met, in the highly skilled journeyman way. What is more, he had learnt the new methods, and while he would cut as many wood-blocks as he could secure, he attached himself securely to a modern engraver, and took up the delicate work of 'touching' the automatically etched zincos. That is a refinement little practised in England now, though I believe the better American magazines still use it. Poins was a genius at it. He always carried a few tools in a pocket-case, and in the twinkling of an eye, while I looked on at the conjuring trick, he would transform a dull blotch into a thing of nicely graduated values.

That, indeed, is the right word. His eyes did twinkle. He was a very large man, with a red face and a slightly waxed moustache. If he twirled the moustache and his small bright eyes shone wickedly, as he drew himself up with conscious pomp, it meant he was in a condition to perform miracles—upon his own work, which now and then he hustled through shamelessly, or

upon another wood-engraver's block, or upon a mere mechanical piece of metal. When it was done, he would take a flat pull of it on our small hand-press, and lay it before me without a word; swaying a little, but otherwise grave, erect, and huge as a retired City policeman. He knew he was a master of craft and cunning, and he was proud of it. And that was all the pride there was in him, for after a glance at the proof I invariably laughed, and he joined in. We recognised, somehow, the absurdity of so gifted a man being so utterly past ambition or even ordinary common sense. He was large-mindedly heedless about money, though he took care to get it. If you told him his account was incorrect, he accepted your word. If he wanted cash, he said so. If you asked a small technical favour and suggested he should charge for it, as often as not he would refuse payment. He rectified his own lapses with a hilarious mixture of equanimity and gusto.

I never knew his exact age. He had been working for *The Magazine* at least thirty years when I met him. Mr. Mullins's henchman told me of his encounters with Mr. James in the early days. Mr. James was a little irascible, but he knew his man. If Poins sent in a baddish piece of work, James would summon him, and make certain arrangements. The engraver would be asked to wait a few minutes. An emissary would pass outward with a parcel as if upon an errand: 'Come and have one round the corner, Mr. Poins, while you're waiting.' Ten minutes later Poins came back ready for any sleight of hand. The only time this method failed, I was told, was once just before Easter. James and Poins were each in a hurry, because both were in some preposterous military costume of that 'Riflemen, form' epoch, and anxious to get away for manoeuvres. James also was a very big man. They confronted one another, and swelled and swelled like a pair of turkey-cocks, Poins slightly the redder. Luckily someone else came in, and they both saw that they were being and looking ridiculous.

That redoubtable engraver never drank to excess. He belonged in soul to the age which lived 'well' and produced the less crapulous jokes in *The Pink 'Un*. Perhaps there was a little more of respectable solidity in the alleged viciousness of his times than in the corresponding quality to-day. At least he earned his money by his skill—and earned it before he spent it.

All that kind of thing vanished during my thirty years of

editorship. It did not survive the War, in outward appearance. All the Victorians had disappeared from our pages well before 1914, except one or two who could adapt themselves reasonably. I had taken over in 1901 traditions and customs at which it is now easy to laugh. I used, I hope, the spirit of them, but modified the letter, slowly but thoroughly. If I look back at, say, the volume for 1906, I find it utterly different from that of 1931; but 1926 is equally different from either. And yet readers and contributors always write about it as if it never changed.

I am not going to describe how the slow evolution has come about. It started in 1866 and it is going on in 1932; so that my New Zealander did not find ruins round St. Paul's, like Macaulay's. Unless a children's magazine has a complete and drastic revolution—which, in the world of periodicals, sooner or later means death—it must always change without seeming to do so. Its public is perpetually undergoing, in mass, the metabolism of the human body, which renews itself every seven years; or the man-controlled destiny of a Kentish ash-copse, cut back and regrown likewise every seven years. That period, oddly enough, is just about the duration of one generation of child-readers.

So *The — Magazine*, in the first nine of such cycles of its life, has had to revive its tissues ceaselessly, sacrificing this or that limb, dropping this outworn feature, growing that novel one for a fresh set of circumstances; so that it has produced, as it were, one new young body about the time when Edward VII died, as it had when Victoria died; and another when the War ended; and still another—when? Now; when I realise that editors also must be cut down that the forest may live.

F. J. HARVEY DARTON.

'VEGETATION.'

BY W. BARNE.

GEORGE BRADY is a tall, gaunt man of about forty-five years, with very steady, serious eyes and a rather tragic expression. He is certainly queer ; he has a quite extraordinary fear and hatred of trees and particularly of creepers such as ivy or virginia creeper ; it is a genuine 'arboriphobia,' to coin a word, that would have brought him to a lunatic asylum some time ago, if he had been less wealthy and therefore less able to arrange his life so as to avoid trees. It is specially remarkable, because he made his large fortune from trees—rubber planting in Malaya at the beginning of this century.

He lives, as a rule, on a steam yacht where he can be sure there will be no trees, but he has in addition a house on the South Downs, which stands in a walled-in garden close to the sea.

Two of the many stories about him will illustrate the violence of his phobia. One day he was digging in his garden, where of course no fruit-trees of any kind are allowed, nor any climbing plant such as vegetable marrow, vines or scarlet runner. Suddenly cries for help were heard ; his butler, who is also his chief steward on the yacht, rushed out to find him lying in a faint on the garden-bed. Two boys for a joke had pitched a long tendril of ivy over the wall which had fallen on top of him as he was digging ; at the sound of his screams on the other side they had fled in terror. He had cut it into short lengths with his spade, and the damaged spade and the surrounding ground showed that he had struck all round him in a frenzy of unthinking terror, before he lost consciousness ; it was months before he recovered.

The second story refers to the incident of the Five Elms, which were really beautiful trees and constituted a local landmark. They were visible from his house and he hated them. After several attempts he succeeded in buying for a large sum the plot of ground on which they stood, and immediately had them cut down. The deed aroused a good deal of animosity, but the crazy part was his apparent personal hatred of the trees. He watched the felling with the cruel glee of a savage watching the execution of his mortal

enemies; afterwards he had the roots torn up and the ground levelled over the site; indeed his mental attitude was that of a madman, though in other respects his actions were sane enough.

His state of mind is easily understood when once the reason for it is known; it lies in his relations with Flemberg in 1904.

The mysterious disappearance of Professor Flemberg in that year brought to a close what promised to be a remarkable career. He had been studying physiology for some years in the Far East, bringing to it German thoroughness and conscientiousness. That he achieved a great deal can hardly be questioned; his private letters were positively exultant in tone, and the last mail received from him, posted at Singapore before sailing to some unknown destination in his small yacht, *Vaterland*, hinted at some experiment which was to be the crowning-point of his four years' work.

From his letters it seems that a large number of his experiments were made possible by his discovery, whether from native sources or from his own investigations, of various novel drugs.

'I have now got,' he wrote in 1903 to a lady in London, 'a never-before-imagined substance. It is in truth a mixture of many each-other-neutralising poisons.'

He had a very wide English vocabulary, but could never express himself in an English way.

'I gave it to four mice and this time they have not died. They lived, but every day became slower in their movements there and here. Heart-beating, breathing, all physical functions slowed down, till after a few days they seemed as if motionless in a catalepsy. But a introduced-into-the-cage-lump-of-sugar had its effect. Within a week each mouse had perceptibly moved; within three months one had reached the sugar. After that it lasted only a fortnight before he had his so-sharp-teeth touching the lump.'

The Professor then says that he 'investigated' each mouse in turn and found certain additions necessary to his drug, to counteract the effect of this extraordinary lethargy. It is indeed a thousand pities that all his memoranda and notes were on the *Vaterland*; nothing whatever remains of these four years of brilliant work.

There has been a tendency to decry Flemberg's work and his abilities, and there are many who frankly do not believe in him, or in the various preparations he casually describes in his letters. Whatever the truth may be about the rest of them, it is certain that the conglomeration of drugs he described to his lady correspondent in 1903 really did exist.

When perfected, for apparently the mice disclosed a serious defect, he called it F.7. When he sailed from Singapore in 1904 it was to study the reactions of various animals under the influence of this F.7; they were collected on a small island, where he had built a bungalow and the necessary laboratories and which he had chosen for its healthiness and remoteness. All this information rests on the word of one person—George Brady.

At that time he was a young planter, who had got into deep water financially through planting up the extensive acreage of rubber which subsequently made his fortune. His coffee, which was to finance the rubber, had failed and he had a mortgage on his estate which he could not meet. In return for £5,000, he agreed to become a subject for the investigation of F.7; Flemberg on his part assured him that he would almost certainly survive, and that, as far as he could judge with his experiments on animals, he would take no harm.

'*Ach so!*' he said, 'that dog of mine was one year under; he has taken no harm and you too will take none. I may want you for several years, but to you it will seem moments; after those moment-lasting-years your rubber will be ripened and you will be rich.'

Professor Flemberg took two months to prepare George Brady for the administration of F.7; he then administered it gradually, spread out over another two months.

Brady's description of the process is most interesting: 'The days and nights seemed gradually to shorten; I very soon found it impossible to eat more than two meals a day, then one meal. Everything quickened up; the Chinese servants seemed to move about the room with the quickness and invisibility of frightened trout. Soon they became almost too fast for the eye to follow and then they became magic invisible servitors. Meals appeared by magic on the table and vanished magically.

'Flemberg himself became an apparition, just visible when he sat motionless for two or three hours, and our only means of communication was the written word, which he left pinned down on the table; I have no idea how long it had to stay before I could read it, for the passage of time had passed clean out of my knowledge; eventually even days and nights became merged together.

'All the usual sounds disappeared, though others took their place. At intervals there were distant dull reports, also I thought I heard a quiet, grinding kind of noise; I could certainly distin-

guish a peculiar hissing, which seemed to start high and then deepen in tone, when it was possible to isolate an individual sound from the general chorus.

'I felt perfectly well, and found movement easier and easier as the pace of everything around me increased.'

The last word he had from Flemberg was a note pinned on his table saying he had to go to Singapore and would be away about twenty days; that the last injection had been given, and that Flemberg expected to return before he had finished reading the note.

The last point is interesting as giving Flemberg's idea of the relative values of ordinary time and of George Brady's time. The note took him, as measured in his own time, five seconds to read, whereas Flemberg expected to be away twenty days; so that a second corresponded to at least four days. There is, however, no doubt that ordinary time got a great deal faster, as the final dose took effect.

Flemberg never returned; it is now supposed that he was lost in a severe storm that was recorded just after the time he left Singapore, and George Brady was therefore left alone in this curious state with the three Chinese servants.

What became of them nobody knows; the facts point to their having decamped with anything they could carry away. They were as invisible to him as a bullet flying through the air; things just appeared or disappeared, and he had neither the power to see, nor the time to reason out, what had happened. Indeed he found himself fighting for his life with what he now considers the most terrible and most remorseless agent in the world—Vegetation.

The first appearance of the enemy charmed and delighted him; a little green shoot of some creeping plant ran up one of the pillars that supported the verandah, just like a tender green snake, wriggled quickly across the roof of the verandah and so into the room. As he watched the pillar he saw that the shoot was swelling and the thick stem, about the size of a man's arm and still swelling, presented an aspect very different from the gentle pale-green shoot that had first charmed him; indeed it looked almost sinister.

Turning round he found dozens, no hundreds, of similar shoots had invaded the bungalow, and it was with a feeling akin to fear that he picked up a heavy machete lying on the table and decided to deal with these creeping wriggling things.

By this time the whole roof, and the windows and the doors on the landward side of the bungalow were blocked with greenery, and he decided very wisely to get out before the shoots blocked up the remaining door. He would certainly have been smothered and strangled if he had remained in the bungalow.

Without having properly realised his danger, it was with a distinct feeling of relief that he found himself in the peaceful sylvan glade in which the house stood.

His further experiences are best related in his own words :

'Everything had happened so quickly and I had so little time to observe. Besides, the mental impression is terrible—I constantly have nightmares still—and that all tends to make accurate observation and recollection difficult.

'Perhaps the first thing I noticed was the complete disappearance of all the insect and bird life. There was no sound or trace of them. The birds and even the mosquitoes had been friendly company, it seemed to me. Now I was quite alone with the vegetable kingdom.

'In the bungalow I had already noticed that all the noises I knew—the beating of the sea against the sand, the singing of the birds and the rustling of the leaves in the wind—had gone ; in their place were now loud groanings, creaking and occasional dull explosions. The sibilant hissing sound I have mentioned was now indescribably menacing, and there was a regular rhythmic sighing something like breathing. Simultaneously I noticed that the trees were growing and altering in shape before my eyes. The world had gone mad.

'The sunlight was no longer steady ; it had become darker, almost twilight, and the light flickered much as the badly constructed cinemas of those days flickered. It made the outline of the leaves seem indefinite and vague. But I had no time to consider this, for a much more amazing phenomenon drew my attention. A big tree near me suddenly disappeared, and reappeared at the same moment on the ground ; it had the suddenness of a conjuring trick. Almost the very moment it reappeared on the ground, little green creepers darted out of the earth all round it, and started running, with the celerity of slender snakes, all over it. But the little green snakes did not pass on but stayed ; and as I watched they began to swell and tighten. The sight gave me the most dreadful sensation of uncontrolled eagerness and voracity ; and, as they ran over it, and over and in and out of

each other, I heard the sibilant hissing sounds I have already mentioned! In almost a moment the tree was smothered with these devilish little shoots, and the growing ends were writhing and struggling with each other.

'In the meantime a battle had developed for the open space left by the big tree that had fallen. From the ground thin stems shot up towards the light, while, on the surrounding trees, branches broke into shoots with little dull reports, and the new growth started racing towards the open bit of sunlight. The fortunate ones that got there first, started putting out shoots in all directions, which fought and mingled with each other. Branches which were late would suddenly stop growing, die and disappear in a moment.

'I noticed one small tree that started late but seemed to grow quicker than the rest, five or ten feet a second. But the mat of leaves was complete and dense before it could get its head through, and as it stopped growing a creeper ran hissing up it, swelling and tightening and strangling it.

'It was a pageant of merciless, selfish, antagonistic forces, struggling together without respite.

'My interest in the amazing sights going on around me very nearly proved my undoing. I had stood still some moments, when I heard the sibilant noise I have mentioned at my feet. I looked down and saw to my horror, that two green creepers had started twining up my legs; they had got above the knee before I saw them; I could feel them squeezing the lower part of my leg, as I watched the delicate green leading shoots writhing spirally upwards towards my head. I started back, but the stems were already too strong for me to break that way, and I could see them getting momentarily thicker and stronger. There was not a second to lose.

'Grasping my heavy machete, I hacked at the creeper that had climbed my left leg. Luckily the first stroke severed it! As I drew my left leg quickly back, five or ten shoots darted up from the severed stem, emerging as quickly as little jets of water, coiling in and out of each other, and swaying in all directions looking blindly for me. I couldn't waste time looking at them, for my right foot was now imprisoned in a spiral as thick as my wrist; and the pain all up my right leg was becoming intense from the ever-increasing pressure.

'Again I struck out with my machete and cut the stem almost through. Numerous shoots were by now running over my chest,

arms and head, always tightening and thickening, while the green leading shoot ran on and on ; the partial cutting of the main shoot slowed down the whole process of growth, and I was able to strike again and sever the stem, before the shoots around my right arm could thicken enough to bind me. As I struck the second time I again saw the green tendrils shooting out from the partially severed creepers. My blow cut through the stem and buried my machete in the ground ; immediately the tendrils fastened on to it with the avidity of ants and again a spiral coil of green began to run like lightning up my arm. My machete was now the centre of a confused mass of green snakes coiling round it and twining round each other. It was like a pack of hounds with a fox. I didn't attempt to recover it, but moved away, for these clasping, creeping tendrils frightened me. I had a peculiar, quite illogical, sympathy for the poor inanimate servant of mine that lay there smothered in the writhing greenery. That pity for inanimate objects at the mercy of vegetation has never left me since.

'As I walked away at every step the green tendrils sprang like malignant little serpents from the ground and started running up my legs ; but I moved quickly and they broke easily as I pulled my feet away. If I had stood still for a few seconds they would have been all over me, smothering and strangling me.

'The grass was rising and disappearing, then rising again and disappearing again, in an even rhythm at about the pace of a man breathing. After a few steps I found myself on a bare sandy place, where at last I had a respite from these dreadful creeping plants.

'As I stood there I noticed the cocoanut trees. The cocoanuts would appear small, swell rapidly and disappear. As I watched them there was a dull explosion at my feet ; one of those sword cactus burst from the ground and started growing at a terrible pace. Three needle-points rushed straight at my breast, and I stepped quickly back to avoid being pricked by them.

'It was then that the worst experience of this ghastly minute occurred. As I stepped back, I hit against one of those hanging creepers so common in the tropics ; you know them, with their big bright-coloured flowers, and in your ignorance you probably think them beautiful. To me they are revolting.

'At once tendrils fastened on my head and neck. I had no knife, but I seized and twisted and tore at the main stem. In a moment it broke out into dozens of little green shoots which emerged

like a swarm of angry bees, coiled round my arms, tied my fingers together, and began rapidly to spread all over me. Thank God my eyes and mouth escaped at first. I managed to get hold of a shoot which had got round my neck, and pulled and pulled at it to loosen it. It seemed less alive and quick than before, but as I grasped it I felt the hateful thing swelling, pushing my fingers apart and hardening into the consistency of wood, while all the time smaller coils were gradually fastening round my arms and shoulders. My knife was gone and I was powerless.

'I shall never forget my agony of mind as I stood there, and felt the green shoots creeping across my breast and arms. Though they were now moving much slower, I did not realise the significance of this fact, that the effect of F.7 was wearing off. Both nostrils were invaded by the hateful things, but I tore my arms clear and pulled them out; I saved my eyes by closing them tight; the wisps of green round me stayed clinging, and slowly began to swell and harden and then to squeeze with tremendous force. It was frightful and loathsome and I fainted with sheer horror!'

How long he remained unconscious can only be surmised. The effect of the drug must have been wearing off fast, otherwise he would have been smothered and killed. The fact that he was able to tear his arms clear shows that Time as men know it was freeing him from the power of Vegetation. He was gradually reasserting the Dominion of Living Things.

When he came to, the danger had passed:

'The flickering light was changed to steady sunlight drifting through the trees; the grass was just ordinary grass; the birds were flying about and chirping to each other; the trees had ceased fighting for space and sunlight and I stood smothered with ordinary hanging creepers.

'It did not take me long to get myself clear. Coloured lizards and large hairy spiders went running off me as I tore the creepers; great flakes of moss fell away and I saw a little snake vanish up into the tree.'

So there he was a solitary Rip Van Winkle, trembling all over, with perspiration streaming off him. The bungalow was a mass of creepers and trees were growing through the roof which had fallen in.

He found some tinned beef and tinned biscuits which had withstood the assault of time, and managed to mend up a boat and get away.

It was 1904 when he landed on the island and 1921 when he left it, and it had passed in a few minutes. There were two redeeming points, he used to say with his serious smile : his rubber had made him a wealthy man in these seventeen years and he had escaped the Great War.

It is difficult for anyone who has heard George Brady describing his experiences to think of trees in quite the usual way. Like the rest of Nature, vegetation is red in tooth and claw, fighting and struggling to eat and not to be eaten. We prey on it, but if we lost the power to move too quickly for it, it would immediately prey on us. It is all a question of the tempo in which we live.

Perhaps it is George Brady who is sane and we who see plants and trees through a sentimental haze !

THE POETRY IN THE PROBLEM.

BY ARTHUR B. WATKINS.

'If we search the examination papers in physics and natural philosophy for the more intelligible questions, we may come across one beginning like this: "An elephant slides down a grassy hillside." The experienced candidate knows that he need not pay much attention to this, it is only put in to give an impression of realism. He reads on: "The mass of the elephant is two tons." Now we are getting down to business, the elephant fades out of the problem, and a mass of two tons takes its place. . . . Two tons is the reading of the pointer when the elephant was placed on a weighing machine. "The slope of the hill is 60 degrees." Now the hillside fades out of the problem and an angle of 60 degrees takes its place. . . . Sixty degrees is the reading of a plumb line against the divisions of a protractor. Similarly for the other data of the problem. The softly yielding turf on which the elephant slid is replaced by a co-efficient of friction. . . .

'And so we see that the poetry fades out of the problem.'

So writes Professor Eddington in *The Nature of the Physical World*, and almost immediately after reading this expression of keen regret for the metamorphosis of the elephant, chance brought about the disinterment of a battered school copy of *Pendlebury's Arithmetic*.

Now if Professor Eddington sees poetry in the motion of an elephant sliding down a hillside, he will probably agree that Mr. Pendlebury should have been the Poet Laureate, for a close perusal of his pages reveals a hitherto unsuspected source of drama and romance. Nay more, apparently without knowing it, Mr. Pendlebury has left us a history of his own life and times.

Most writers present their own personalities in some form or other, and our author is no exception to the rule. He stands before us, a man of easy temperament, in easy circumstances, a creature of the study and its midnight oil, so steeped in a passion for mathematics as to be entirely divorced from the realities of life, and credulous to an incredible degree.

From his lengthy invoices of candles ranging through every

variety from Palmer's best at 23s. a box for the drawing-room, down to composite at 8½d. a lb. for the servants, we know that he ran a large establishment and disliked gas. He had many friends, and in spite of his prepossession for figures, his wine bills suggest a fair amount of entertaining at home; and the mention of carriage candles hints that the carriage and pair was often in use at night.

He had large holdings in Home Railway stocks with values quite undreamed of by us, Midland Ordinaries being 158 and North Westerns 171!

We gather from his constant attention to the results of transferring capital in the 3 per cents. to stocks with a higher rate of interest that he had expectations from a wealthy relative with money in the Funds; and his Income Tax varied from 3d. to 10d. in the pound.

His grandfather was an old naval officer who used his seaman's privilege to the full as he spun his yarns with a wealth of meticulous detail, and a striking disregard for probability. There was also an agricultural uncle, to whose farm Mr. Pendlebury paid frequent visits, but although he has left us a fine picture of the strenuous old days of long hours, hard work, and little pay, he shows little real acquaintance with practical matters.

His easy temperament allowed him to endure for long the experimental mixtures of quality in the goods supplied by various tradesmen, notably the wine merchant and the grocer. Their aims were first mainly directed towards the prevention of possible loss in their dealings, but gradually as they discovered Mr. Pendlebury's weaknesses, they grew more and more avaricious in their ideas.

The grocer indeed did not go so far as Mr. Chesterton's who

' . . . sells us sands of Araby
As sugar, for cash down;
He sweeps the floor and sells the dust
The purest salt in town!'

but he mixed so much inferior sugar into the best sorts, and put so much chicory into the coffee, that at last the worm turned, and his shortcomings in the quality of goods, and the doubtfulness of his scales have passed into a problem where Mr. Pendlebury plaintively asks us to express the true measure of fraud and immorality in terms of figures!

The worst sinner of all was the dairyman, who diluted his milk

with 25 per cent. added water, making 60 per cent. profit while selling at 3d. a quart! At least so it is stated, but what we want to know is for how long did he continue to make this profit undisturbed by the complaints of his customers, or the visits of the Milk Inspector?

Unnumbered examples might be quoted of our author's amazing credulity. Perhaps one of the finest is the case of the two trains on the same line, proceeding in the same direction with the comfortable working distance of eight miles between them. 'At what time,' he gravely asks, 'will the second train run into the first?' Well, even the most unobservant of us would reply, 'What was the matter with the signals?'

We know from the high value of the stocks that the English railway systems must have been in very efficient working order, and yet there is put before us the unprecedented notion of the driver of the second train bidding his stoker, 'Fire up, Jack! if we can only raise a few more pounds of steam, we'll have him in another mile! we'll teach him to block our road!'

And yet on second thoughts, did not something of the kind occur when Major Yeates, R.M., travelled on the delayed local train in the midnight dash to catch the Mail at the Junction?

"Mind the goods, Tim," shouted the station-master, "she might be coming any time now!" The answer travelled magnificently back from the engine.

"Let her come! She'll meet her match." A war whoop upon the whistle fittingly closed the speech, and the train sprang into action. We have our answer; it must have happened in Ireland.

And it is to be feared that Grandfather Pendlebury took an unholy delight in pulling his grandson's leg. He tells him of a pet monkey who pertinaciously stuck to the task of climbing a greasy pole 60 feet high, in spite of the fact that out of every three feet he climbed, he slipped back two. Now the grandson obviously thought that this gallant rivalry to Bruce's spider should be put on record, without feeling any of the doubts that rise to our minds. The spider at least had a reasonable motive, but what kept the monkey to his work? Did Grandfather use a banana in front or a marlinspike behind?

He tries again. 'Two monkeys,' says he, 'having stolen a pile of walnuts and filberts from a garden, are on the point of beginning their feast, when they see the *injured owner* of the nuts approach-

ing with a stick. *At once they* see that he will take $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes to reach them——' which is quite enough for us; we see those strangely gifted monkeys, like the White Rabbit, pulling watches out of their waistcoat pockets, timing that injured owner as he strides across the garden. We feel, too, that Sir Arthur Keith should have had the pleasure of their acquaintance.

But Mr. Pendlebury is blind to the service he might have rendered to Science; what is the reasoning power of monkeys compared with their internal capacity, and other such problems of time and space?

But then he is stupidly blind to the right value of most things; what do we care for the average weight of the Cambridge crew, unless we know the Oxford weights as well?

It is just the same when grandfather gets on to his old Naval yarns, and it is a thousand pities that he did not write his reminiscences himself. He undoubtedly took part in the Franklin Search Expeditions, and also saw considerable active service, which involved him in frequent disputes over prize money with the Admiralty. Like all old Admirals he thinks the service is going to the dogs and quotes the verse:

'When sailors lived on biscuits hard,
And mouldy scraps of pork,
No Frenchman dared to show his nose
Between the Downs and Cork.

But now that Jack gets beef and greens,
And next his skin wears flannel,
They say we've not a ship at all
In plight to keep the Channel.'

'What weight of food did you get per day?' asks the grandson.

'Why, $33\frac{1}{2}$ ounces was the rule,' says the old boy, 'not including spirits and tobacco; but when I was in——'

But his grandson is not listening; while grandfather is telling how the messmen played 'shuteye' for the rations of salt pork, and how many weevils went to the square inch of biscuit, which really would have interested us, he is wasting his time calculating how soon an eleven-stone man would eat his own weight!

Then there is the episode of the escaping prisoner; though a Hydrographer would no doubt be interested in the moorings of a ship four miles from shore, and a Channel swimmer in the strength

of the ebb and flood tides, what we wait for in vain is to hear how they hailed from the main-top that there was a certain liveliness ashore, how they beat to quarters, how they lowered away the cutter, picked up the fugitive just at the last moment, and drove off the pursuit with a few well-placed rounds of grape.

Similarly, in one of the actions where grandfather earned some prize money, we are fobbed off with the dull fact that the battle-ship and the frigate between them fired in five hours 842 tons 15 cwt. 2 qrs. 24 lb. of solid shot; instead of hearing how grandfather waved his sword, in the manner of brave Broke of the *Shannon*, and led the boarders to a glorious victory.

Even an epic adventure of the sea is wasted upon the unappreciative grandson. The old seaman tells how his ship sprang a leak, and do what they could, and pump as they would, the water gained on them steadily. Was the gallant commander downhearted? Not he! He clapped on all sail, stunsails out aloof and aloft, and drove her 600 miles in 48 hours to reach the land before she sank. Now how that all but waterlogged vessel kept up the rate of speed of a crack clipper ship running her easting down must for ever remain a mystery. It is a national tragedy that the story survives only in a mathematical exercise; and yet, as they would say in the *Arabian Nights*, this is not more wonderful than the story of the whaling ship.

Grandfather fairly spread himself over the details of this cruise, and really it is a feather in his cap that he got away with it!

For even the most credulous of listeners must surely have smelt a rat, must have disregarded the circumstantial accounts of the number of whales caught, the average oil per whale, captain's percentage on the same, the time spent on watch, and the $27\frac{2}{3}$ days between each capture, when he heard that they took place during a four-years' voyage in the Arctic Ocean, of all places in the world! But the grandson, blind as usual to the realities of life, never pondered for one moment on the conditions of an Arctic winter with its frozen sea and absence of daylight; and if any doubts ever crossed his mind on questions of supplies or refitting the ship, they were evidently dispelled by grandfather's airy references to the famous old 'North Pole Victualling Yard' at Fury Beach.

There remain for us two possible considerations. Tom Cringle tells of the huge whale in whose interior was found a Greenland-man with her royal yards crossed and her master and mate in the

cabin quarrelling about the reckoning! This might well be our ship but if not, then her captain's name was Vanderdecken, and the Arctic Ocean provides a fitting prelude to her last unending voyage.

And so we leave the old sailor, and make our acquaintance with the Agricultural Uncle.

He too is a striking figure, for his farm and his men already belong to legend, though it is but yesterday that they flourished.

Just as the Income Tax Payer and the holder of Railway Ordinary Stock must sigh for the happier days of Mr. Pendlebury, so every farmer must regret the passing of the more spacious times of Mr. Pendlebury's uncle.

His wheat sold at 42s. a quarter, his barley at 21s., and his oats at 18s. The lowest price for a horse was £30, and cows averaged from £8 to £12. He could make a profit on milk that retailed at 3d. a quart, and eggs at three a penny.

His rates varied from 9d. to 10½d. in the pound, and the highest wage might reach 18s. a week (a man who drew so much could reasonably lay by 1s. 9d. weekly, and we ourselves have known one who raised a family in comfort on 20s.). Labour was plentiful as it was cheap. Uncle Pendlebury was never short handed in harvest time. He never offered a job to a group of gentlemen lolling in idleness and received for answer: 'Sorry, Mister, we're on the Exchange.'

As his average number of mowers alone was about twenty, goodness knows what his total strength must have been. And they worked. Uncle Pendlebury's men could swing a scythe 12 hours a day for 30 days on end. It is a pity that his nephew omits all reference to the allowance of beer per head. Surely a man of so many wine bills might have taken more interest in the humbler comforts of life.

It must pass as another of those tantalising problems to which we shall never have an answer.

And again we ask in vain, did the labourer with the horse-roller in the ten-acre field really and truly *walk* the 24½ miles as stated?

Did A, B and C who jointly rented the grazing for different numbers of cattle for differing periods, really end in the amicable settlement recorded? Two and two rarely make four in agriculture; and knowing A, B, and C in the flesh, somehow we fancy that while the County Court judge supplied one answer to the

problem, the tap-rooms of various public-houses resounded for weeks with the arguments of numberless amateur arithmeticians.

And when B turned up to help, after A had already mowed four-fifths of the field, did they really set out to measure what was left, without any cursory remarks from A on indolence and sloth? Ah well, he was a simple-minded man, our Mr. Pendlebury; no one could resist pulling his leg, but even grandfather in his best form could hardly approach Uncle Pendlebury's old horseman.

Our author, being in the stable, commended the appearance of the old man's team.

'Good-looking 'osses, Mr. Charles?' is the reply. 'Oh aye, they're well enough, right good workers and all, but yo ort to 'a seen them as I 'ad when I wukked for Mester Stafford! Gret big upstanding beggars they were! And pull! Why one season I ploughed seven acre a day with 'em regular. Mester Stafford sed he never seed nowt like it!'

Surely for once there is considerable virtue in the 'If' of that problem in which Mr. Pendlebury enshrines the memory of that wonderful team; surely there floated through his mind an echo of the old horseman's song at Harvest Supper, 'We're all Jolly Fellows that follow the Plough,' with its insistence on one acre per day being good enough work for anybody!

But anyway, doubts or none, there is the story in cold print, and grandfather's monkeys have found worthy comrades in the land of romance.

It would appear that after this and other extravagances such as the ninety mowers in one field, Uncle Pendlebury took his nephew in hand.

'For goodness' sake, Charles,' he must have said, 'if you are going to put us and our ways into your arithmetic, do try and keep things more rational. In those grazing problems now, don't try to delude anyone into thinking that a certain acreage will maintain the same head of cattle unfailingly for the same length of time any year and every year. It may do so in figures, but it won't do so in fact, and don't you forget it.'

And so for once our mathematician makes some concession to reality. Practically all his grazing problems contain the proviso 'the grass growing uniformly.'

'And where and in what favoured climate was this farm?' we ask with a sigh, thinking sadly of our own continuous winters. Uncle Pendlebury's cattle grazed contentedly, undisturbed by

drought while hay and corn harvest followed each other through weeks and weeks of good dry weather. Did one splendid year tinge with rose all our mathematician's memories of the place? Or was it really in the island of Avilion

'Where falls not rain nor hail nor any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly'?

It is true that Mathematics can now take us beyond the reach of the imagination far into the depths of Space; yet, who, in the old days, sitting either in sorrow over troublous masses of figures, or sinfully putting them into order with the aid of the answers, would have dreamed that Mr. Pendlebury could lead us into Fairyland, could make the desert blossom like the rose, or above all show us The Poetry in the Problem?

DELIBERATE BREAKAGE.

BY W. M. LETTS.

It may not strike you as noteworthy that the elderly assistant of Messrs. Steele, clockmakers, of High Street, Fulchester, was making his way down the avenue of Longfield Littleleat on a September morning in quite modern times. Nothing could, one must grant, be more commonplace. Mr. Stonedale, who had been Steinthal before the War, looked just what he was, a trustworthy doctor of clocks. So trustworthy that his German origin, which had left him with a wholly British accent, was never held against him. In fact, even among those elderly ladies and gentlemen who still hold all Germans personally responsible for submarines and poison gas, it was admitted that Mr. Stonedale's German blood gave him a sort of affinity with clocks.

And so he was the established clock doctor of that part of his south-west county. He knew all the old houses and their clocks. He knew French, German, Dutch, English, Swiss clocks. His black bag suggested the doctor which in his way he was. The heart, the nerves, the interior system of a clock was his business and he gave himself up to it from the moment when he entered a client's house.

Of Mr. Stonedale's individual interests and tastes no one enquired. He was a silent man, absorbed in his work, and beyond confirming your opinion of the weather, wet or fine, he said nothing.

If his visit extended over lunch-time, a butler or a maid frequently brought him a cup of tea and bread and butter, which he took in that respectable solitude which occurs between the dining-room and the kitchen.

So to return to his quiet progress up the avenue of Longfield Littleleat, there seems nothing remarkable about it. Messrs. Steel had announced his coming—'Our Mr. Stonedale will wait upon you September 20th, and regulate all clocks at your order and convenience.'

The master of the house gave the letter to the butler.

'There's a man coming to see the clocks, Jenkins.'

'Yes, sir. Mr. Stonedale, sir?'

'I forget.'

'He used to come, sir, he knows them all.'

'Be sure he sees to the boudoir clocks.'

'Yes, sir.'

So much for that. Mr. Stonedale by this time has reached a bend in the beech avenue. From this point he always looked for the first sight of the Elizabethan house. His habit was to walk with eyes on the ground, a dry, rather monkish man this, but from the avenue gate he looked at everything, and now he paused with his hat off, gazing at the old house with its ornamented high chimneys against a cloud-embattled sky. No one suspected that this was one of Mr. Stonedale's 'moments,' that the beauty of the old house among its rooky trees, with the grey curve of downland behind it, filled him with a pleasure that he could not get from American films or jazz music or the last music-hall song. His wife had found him one of those dull husbands whose capacity to earn is their only excuse for existence. She had reached a state of toleration which she attributed to her own sense of humour and dutiful affection.

'He's an old oddity,' she said to her own bright friends when she explained his absence from some six-reel drama of passion and murder.

She had never seen his face when he got that first glimpse of the old house. And, like a doctor, he did not discuss his patients or their owners in the family circle.

'He tells me nothing . . . I don't think he notices anything or anyone. Just clocks . . . clocks. Never gets any news out of the servants as he might do. If it were me, now . . . ' So said Mrs. Stonedale, whose conversation was always fluent and copiously informed.

Mr. Stonedale went his way along the avenue until he was in full view of the house. It rose above terraces of grass. A peacock screamed from the low bough of a cedar. Two spaniels got up and came barking to greet him. They were merely exclamatory, as their wagging tails showed him. Mr. Stonedale looked up at the house. Up to the second story the walls held a riot of coto-neaster, and jessamine and Seven-Sister rose, with a wine-red tapestry of ampelopsis.

One would not have suspected Mr. Stonedale of emotional moments. Yet he had one at this sight of the house. He stood still. He thought of turning back. He felt sensations that were at once physical and mental. He would have said—'I am out of sorts.'

But the emotion was for the house. This was the first time he had come to it in strange and, as he judged it, vulgar hands. It was like seeing a princess the slave of a churl. How could he bear it without protest.

Everyone knew the story, for the newspapers had licked every drop of sensationalism out of it. Lady Hermione Longfield, who was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Fulchester, and wife of Sir Ralph Longfield, master of Littleleat, had been killed in a motor accident when her husband was driving. Local opinion held that he was drunk at the time, though he had escaped the manslaughter charge. In an indecently short time he had married a twice-divorced cinema actress, and within the same year he was a bankrupt and Longfield Littleleat was for sale.

It was bought at once by Thomas Turton, known as the Toffee King. His toffee factory was near Fulchester and his advertisements had a hateful familiarity. 'Turton's Tug-of-War Toffee.' One had to see it in stations, on hoardings, on the fire-screen of theatres. One had to note the Turton sense of humour—a fat policeman and a fat cook having a tug-of-war with a terrible rope of toffee, or two street arabs, the toffee in their teeth, pulling away from each other. Mr. Stonedale hated toffee, and the tins, so frequently to be met in his own house, were an offence to him. That Mr. Turton should buy this home of an antique race seemed to him criminal. True that the old family had become dissolute and degenerate in its last member, Sir Ralph, that he had only known how to sell his best pictures to America, and let everything else go to decay. Still he was a Longfield, descendant of those portraits whose grave eyes watched Mr. Stonedale while he regulated the hall clock. He, the seemingly unobservant, knew each portrait, its history, its artist. He could have told you things that would have made an art critic look at him respectfully. Mr. Stonedale's 'Inventory of treasures at Littleleat' would have been worth reading.

And now he was coming to a ravished house, to a place despoiled of its hereditary treasures, for the auction had been a gathering of vultures, or of dealers.

He foresaw that the Toffee King would have, as he put it, stickied everything. Probably some of the big firms were furnishing for him. What would Thomas Turton know of an Elizabethan house?

Mr. Stonedale was firm with himself, he walked up to the door

and rang the bell. As usual the great oak door was open and the hall full of pot flowers. In a moment a familiar figure came to greet him. It was the Longfield butler, the one who had been with old Sir Ralph too, before ever the young man took the reins.

'Good morning, Mr. Stonedale.'

'Good morning.' Mr. Stonedale with hat removed from a grey head, came in and looked about him enquiringly. The portraits had gone, but nothing took their places. The hall was severe but still beautiful.

'You'll find the clocks as usual, Mr. Stonedale, I don't think you'll find much difference. Mr. Turton says you're to be sure to go to the boudoir.'

'Her ladyship's boudoir?'

'Yes, the master said so. Ring if you want anything, won't you?' The butler went off with a brisk step on the oak floor. He seemed cheerful in spite of the awful fate of the home where he was almost a hereditary servant.

Mr. Stonedale followed his methodical habit and inspected the clock in each room. The dining-room was changed. Its portraits had gone, but there were excellent steel engravings on the wall, and in place of the old furniture the room was furnished with modern oak. The design showed a craftsman's hand. Mr. Stonedale admitted the excellence and said 'London Furnisher.' In the drawing-room much was the same as in old days, but there was less of it and there were things he had not seen before, an old sampler, an embroidered fire-screen, a bureau. The room was full of flowers. As he came in, a maid he knew by sight was arranging a large glass jar on a table.

'Mrs. Turton likes flowers, I suppose,' said Mr. Stonedale, a remark that surprised himself.

'There is no Mrs. Turton—she died years ago, I believe. Mr. Turton likes flowers everywhere. Miss Myra, his daughter, has just gone back to school abroad.'

Conversation ceased. Mr. Stonedale was absorbed in the clock.

It was nearly lunch-time when he went up the stairs and down the corridor that led to the boudoir. He expected the flood of sunshine as he opened the door, but he did not expect to find the room just as it had been in the past. But there was one change. The portrait of Lady Hermione by Lazlo hung alone on one wall. It took possession of the room, a lovely picture; it had once hung

in the drawing-room. Mr. Stonedale shut the door and stood before the picture in silence. He recalled the lady of it as he had seen her here in this very room. She had come in while he was at work at the mantelpiece clock, a little French one in a china case, a troublesome little clock. But all her care was for the cuckoo clock on the wall.

'My cuckoo won't cuckoo, Mr. Stonedale,' she said laughingly, 'it's serious to me, you know. I love it so—I bought it in Germany with my own money. I did so love Germany with all its forests and old towns and music and toys and lovely things. I always half-expect my cuckoo to come out and tell me stories. But now he's quite silent, please do cure him.'

She had left him for a little, while he found out the trouble. Indeed, the clock had to go into his black bag and be brought to Fulchester; but when she returned the butler followed her with a tea-tray. She had insisted that the clock man should have tea with her and she had talked to him until he had found himself talking in return, a habit that he had lost somehow in married life. He told her of his early childhood in Germany, never mentioned now, of his memories of the old grandmother and her tales, of the father who had come over as clockmaker and settled in London. He spoke suddenly of the things he loved, of music, of good pictures, of old houses like Littleleat. It had seemed to him almost a dream. As he went home in the local train to Fulchester he could not believe that he had really talked like that to Lady Hermione Longfield. Yet it was true. He was certain that she had gone to a cottage piano, a Schiedmeyer, of soft tone, and sung him Volkslieder in the tongue of his early childhood.

At his own supper-table he had been as dull a dog as ever that night—nothing to tell of his doings. His marriage seemed to himself a curious accident that had once befallen him, and in a life that seemed intended for celibacy, the children had an accidental quality too. There was a boy with a passion for mechanics who, having somehow got a violin, rose at dawn and practised in the kitchen. When Mr. Stonedale heard strains of Corelli and Mozart rise through his bedroom floor, he wondered if really he had a son of his own. But the boy was inexpressive and lived to himself, and there was no approach between them.

The portrait of Lady Hermione recalled that afternoon sharply. The clock man gazed into the pictured face and wondered in rising anger how the toffee-vendor had come by it. How had he dared

to buy it? Why had not one of the family foiled him? This vulgar tradesman had dared to keep the room as it was, with her piano, her books, her little treasures all in their old places. Perhaps a heavy lump of a daughter sat up here. Perhaps she heard the clock cuckoo and despised it as a childish thing.

Mr. Stonedale was up on his little ladder by now, small folding steps that he borrowed from the butler. He took the little carved clock from the wall; he held it in his hands. Anger surged through him, jealousy of the man who bought what he wanted, who paid money for loveliness and romance.

While he held it in his hands, the master of the house had come up the iron steps from the garden to the French windows of the boudoir. As he stood there, Mr. Stonedale dropped the clock upon the parquetry floor. The action had a quiet deliberation about it. But having done it, Mr. Stonedale put his hands to his face, like one who will not see the death he had ordered. The master of the house opened the glass door and came in.

'You dropped that clock deliberately,' he said.

'I did,' said Mr. Stonedale.

The two men looked at each other. The elderly, grey-haired clockmaker stood on the little ladder and gazed at the toffee-maker. He saw a very tall man, white-haired, dark-eyed; a man as handsome as any of the gallants and soldiers who had once hung in the hall and dining-room. Even that Cavalier Longfield, Sir Ralph, who had been killed at Marston Moor, was not more picturesque than this tradesman. He looked like a man who commanded. Yet Mr. Stonedale was not afraid. He descended from his ladder and picked up the cuckoo clock.

'I hope you will let me pay for my damage, sir. May I buy the clock?'

Thomas Turton had not shifted an unwinking gaze from the other man's face.

'That will in no way repair the damage. You have done an irreparable thing. Besides, I believe you dropped the clock deliberately.'

'I did.' Mr. Stonedale was very white, but he was unflinching under those eyes which had overawed many rebellious souls. 'You will, of course, report me to Mr. Steele?'

'You have no idea what I shall do, Mr. Stonedale. At the moment I shall ring the bell.'

They waited in silence until a maid came to the door.

'Tell Jenkins I want the sherry, two glasses and the sandwiches I saw were ready for Mr. Stonedale. Oh, and tell him to send up those peaches.'

Mr. Turton walked to the french window and stood in the September sunshine on the balcony until the butler had left the tray on the table and gone his way. Then he returned, poured out two glasses of sherry, drew a chair up to the table and signed to the clock man to take his place opposite.

'You and I,' he said abruptly, 'are two working men—I beg your pardon—I am a tradesman, you are a skilled mechanic. By industry and certain gifts I have made a fortune. You, in spite of your skill, have not. Still I feel to you as to a superior worker. That being so, when you have drunk your wine, I hope you will tell me why you broke that particular clock.'

Mr. Stonedale, an abstemious man, drank his sherry at a gulp and silently accepted the second glassful. A curious dream sense took possession of him. It was impelling, it made him speak the truth in a fashion that he would not have used for anyone, so strict was his reticence, so many his inhibitions.

'I dropped it,' he said, 'in a sudden fury that you should have this cuckoo clock which was a treasure to Lady Hermione Longfield. When I saw her boudoir just as it was, with her portrait there instead of herself, as though you, an outsider to all the traditions of the place, were trying to keep her, to buy her, like a chattel of the house, I felt a sudden impulse to baulk you. I meant to tell you I had broken the clock and that I would get you another. I meant to take her clock home, to keep it myself. . . .'

Mr. Turton's eyes were fixed on the speaker.

'Yes, I am understanding—you knew Lady Hermione? She came in here?'

'The last year of her life, yes. Some months before she was killed. I was in here and she came in by the french window as you did. She seemed to me to be more alive than anyone I knew. I do not notice people much. Clocks interest me more. But she was all that one sometimes dreams a woman might be. That portrait, it is good. It has her laughing hazel eyes. But no picture could ever make her live as she lived here. Sir Joshua Reynolds would have caught something of her spirit. She was of his period. But that was the outward form of her. It was something else that took one by storm. Spirit . . . yes, her spirit, I suppose. She had my name, from the servants of course. I was

not just "the man from Steele's about the clock." I was Mr. Stonedale. And she just took for granted that I was Steinthal, a man who would be full of German tastes and traditions. She loved the traditions and she told me so. I was, you see, a human being to her. I don't think I am a human being to anyone else . . . not to the shop . . . not in my own home. I can't think how she found out that I am a human being, that I love beauty, that I love these old English houses, their pictures, their furniture, their flowers. She took it for granted. She made me take tea with her, talked to me easily, warmly as she would talk to her own friends, or indeed to the King if he came. I think people were like that to her . . . just human beings. She seemed to walk in a world where men and women were crystal and she saw their minds and hearts. She sang to me before I left, just to remind me of folk songs I had known as a child. It was a condescension . . . of course it was. But she never thought it . . . she never guessed that she was a goddess to me, that I could have kept her little slippers in a shrine to kiss each day. Don't misunderstand me, sir—I am a dutiful husband on the whole, if a dull one. If I fell in love that day, it was with beauty and goodness. Someone had made all loveliness and friendship visible and audible. I did not expect ever to see Lady Hermione again—I never did. But all life is different because I have talked with her for half an hour. You may believe me or not—I look a dry old nut, don't I? But I know that we all live by romance of some sort or other.

'That lady taught me to live. She made me feel that I was interesting, that life was worth while. Then you know what happened? Her death . . . I was almost glad of that, for what life had she with that waster, her husband? And the rest followed—his bankruptcy and your purchase of the house—I pictured you a . . .'

'Vulgarian?' suggested Mr. Turton.

'Yes, perhaps—I thought everything would be changed, I never dreamed that you would have bought her in like this—even her cuckoo clock, such a childish thing of hers. So . . . that is all . . . that is why I smashed it.'

Mr. Turton sighed. He handed the sandwiches with a masterful gesture.

'Eat, man,' he said, 'you need food. I'll talk now. Yes, I do understand all that you've told me. My case was almost the same. The first time that I met her was when she and some friends

of hers came to see over the factory. I showed them round. It was an advertisement for me—I never let any chance slip, I keep pulling—Tug-of-War Toffee, you know. I went down to our reception room and there she was, so lovely, so unique. She was full of delight in the creepers we have up the factory, and in our workers' gardens. It was so genuine. And I, too, was a human being to her, not just a Toffee King. You and I have no cause for jealousies. We were just real people to her, adventures of the spirit. In a way she was as impersonal as Botticelli's new-born Venus, wave-washed, cool. But while I talked to her, I was the person who mattered. Toffee-making was her interest, something heroic, exciting, an achievement. I felt it was, absurd as it seems.

'After that day I saw Lady Hermione several times. I was on the Hospital Committee with her. To the other people I was just the Toffee King, a rich man, a vulgarian with a long purse. But to her I was somebody who loved beautiful things as she did. She found out that I collected engravings. That new oak furniture in my dining-room—I showed her the designs. She came with me to see the man who makes it. I brought Myra, my daughter. She's the dearest thing I have. I wanted her to see what beauty and grace and "noblesse" can be. That memory should be worth more than her foreign schools and her visits to big houses.

'Well then . . . the end came. Like you, I was glad of her freedom, glad as one could be for a caged bird which dies and gets away from its bars. She was a bird set free. When the house was for sale I bought it . . . I think I bought it for Lady Hermione, because I knew that I would keep it for her, that she should be remembered in every room, that all her loveliness should be about us like air and sunlight and flowers. I think the servants understand. And they are learning to love my Myra—perhaps she may win some fraction of this lady's grace.'

Mr. Turton stood up. He laughed.

'How curious that we two tradesmen . . . not gentlemen, mind you . . . bourgeois fellows, are talking like this. I wonder what Jenkins would think of you, what the shop would think of you. I have to go into Fulchester, but first we must settle about the clock.'

Mr. Stonedale waited expectantly. The master of the house stood deep in thought by the picture of Lady Hermione. Suddenly he spoke.

'I know,' he said, 'we'll bury it. Bring it along in your bag.'

I'll get a spade from the toolshed. We'll bury it among the honeysuckle azaleas. They've the sweetest scent on God's earth. She was like that scent. Her clock shall be buried, and only you and I will know. Come on.'

The two men went down the stairs. Mr. Stonedale put on his hat and followed the Toffee King to a corner of the wild garden where the azaleas' leaves had turned claret-red.

Mr. Turton dug a deep hole. Mr. Stonedale lined it with leaves; then he laid the cuckoo clock in the grave and covered it with yet more leaves.

'Requiescat in pace,' said Mr. Turton.

'Amen,' said Mr. Stonedale.

With uncovered heads they stood and looked at the nameless grave of the cuckoo clock. Then they shook hands solemnly and walked in silence towards the toffee-maker's waiting car.

That night Mrs. Stonedale, washing up the supper things (the maid was out), complained to her daughter.

'Your father takes no interest in anything. He was at Little-leat to-day, the Longfields place, where the scandal was about Sir Ralph and that actress, and he hasn't a word to say at supper. If it were me now, I'd have heard everything from the servants and I'd have some nice bright conversation. Besides clocks, that man sees nothing. If he is your father, Alice, and he is, he's no intelligence that I ever noticed. He goes through life eyes shut and ears stopped up, as the Psalms say. I don't know what interests he has at all. You'd never think he was my other half—now would you?'

Alice dried the saucers.

'No,' she said, and again 'No.'

HYLAS.

'MID green shaded thickets I
 Wandered lone and wanton by
 Till I heard soft rivers near
 Rippling crystal waters clear.
 Like a silver mirror bright
 Shining in the moon-beamed night
 Lay a pool close-ringed with flowers ;
 What a place for summer hours !

As I stretched upon a stone
 Peered a face—it was my own
 Looking from the water-lilies.
 Round the bank were daffodillies,
 White narcissi blooming late.

Dreamed I of Narcissus' fate ?
 No. I dreamt of Hylas slim
 Bending o'er the river brim,
 Of white nymphs who watched him take
 Water from the sacred lake.
 Then I saw their love-lit eyes
 Blue as sapphires or the skies,
 And I saw their arms embrace
 As they closed about my face,
 Then I felt their finger-tips,
 Then I kissed their cool soft lips.

Now I haunt it ever more,
 Sit beside the green pool's shore.
 Some day I shall disappear
 To the nymphs within the mere.

H. N. FORBES.

THE BUDDHA OF AMERICA.

BY J. LESLIE MITCHELL.

THERE are few such instances of unwarranted shrinking from publicity as that displayed by the angel Moroni, inspirer of the Book of Mormon. On the night of September 1, 1823, Moroni appeared in a vision to Joseph Smith, a farm-labourer in the State of New York, and communicated to him news of staggering import to every student of ancient American history :

‘He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. . . . Also there were two stones in silver bows . . . and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted *seers* in ancient or former times ; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.’

Next day, led by the vision, Joseph arrived at ‘the village of Manchester, Ontario county,’ where stood ‘a hill of considerable size and the most elevated of any in the neighbourhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box.’

Joseph was next commanded to extract the plates and, with the aid of the *seers*, to set about translating them. They were inscribed with characters ‘in general of the ancient Egyptian order.’ Divinely equipped, Joseph speedily translated these characters into pseudo-English—a translation which now constitutes the American Bible of the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

Up to the point of revealing the whereabouts of the plates, the conduct of Moroni may be regarded as irreproachable. From thence onwards, however (viewed from the standpoint of the Americanist), he deteriorated rapidly. He gave strict injunctions to Joseph not to show the plates to any ‘unbelievers’ on the penalty of the translator being ‘cut off.’ That open-minded examination, comparison and criticism essential in testing the authenticity of archaeological finds was strictly forbidden ; and Joseph seems to have taken the threat of his mystic mutilation to heart. He guarded the contents of the stone box with jealous severity. No sooner

was the work of translation done than Moroni hurriedly appeared again, collected the plates, and vanished with them; leaving Joseph to publish the translation and found a new religious sect on the strength of the revelations therein contained.

No satisfactory explanation of Moroni's suspicious exclusiveness has ever been advanced by the Church of Latter-Day Saints. Even the helpful, if infidel, suggestion that the angel was so ashamed of the execrable style and grammar of the engraved account that he shrank from its examination by any other than farm-hinds, is not fully satisfactory. The fact remains that but for Moroni's unaccountable sensitiveness we should now be in possession of a Rosetta Stone with which to unpry the secrets of Ancient American history. Stylistic criteria apart, it is impossible to believe but that in more competent hands the plates would have yielded up quite other things than the dreary record of a tribe of stray Hebrews magically—and altogether unwarrantably—conveyed across the Pacific to American shores in 590 B.C. Undoubtedly they accounted for those most mysterious happenings in pre-Columbian history—the origin and extinction of the Maya Old Empire in Guatemala; the building of the great megalithic city of Tiawanako in the Peruvian Andes; the whereabouts of Leif Erikson's landfall in Labrador; and undoubtedly they settled once and for all the true origin, nature and fate of that personage who haunted and bemused the mind of the Ancient American almost as much as he haunts and bewilders the imagination of the modern enquirer—Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent.

No mystery, indeed, to which Moroni could have supplied the key is quite so fascinating as identification of the last named. The general reader encounters him but seldom—in the pages of Prescott's suave history of the Spanish Conquest, in General Lew Wallace's novel *The Fair God*, and such-like. But, these genteel commentators apart, there has grown up round Quetzalcoatl in the last three centuries a stupendous literature of comment and suggestion—generally, it is to be feared, as turgid as erudite, and quite obscuring the unspecialist interest to which the Feathered Serpent, most alien god in the native American pantheons, may lay claim.

The background and ancestry of his avatar appears to have been briefly this:

By the end of the sixth century A.D., the Maya Old Empire

in Chiapas and Guatemala, the only tract in America bearing anything worthy the name of a civilisation, had crashed to its fall. Great cities and palaces and painted temples, the work of generations of skilled artisans and artists, were abandoned overnight. In flight before some unexplained catastrophe, the Maya dispersed to north and south of their ancient habitat in urgent exodus. The majority of them forced their way eastwards into the neighbouring peninsula of Yucatan, there to salvage some part of their culture and wait for another thousand years to bring them the ships of Cortes and their conqueror, Francisco de Montejo.

The northwards-making refugees, however, appear to have constituted no pressing hijra of tribes. Instead, they percolated through the jungle of the Tehuantepec neck in a thin trickle into the Valley of Mexico. There they seem to have encountered, advancing southwards in straggling migration, new tribes descending from the North American plateau. These tribes were Nahuas—kin to the much later and as yet unapparent Aztecs.

A fusion of refugee Maya and barbarian Nahua took place. The Nahuas were probably barely advanced beyond the ancient food-gathering stage common to all communities of the ancient world. In contacts with the shrunken remnants of the Maya civilisation they abandoned a nomad existence for tentative settlements, a sketchy agriculture and—inexorable concomitants—the breeding of priesthoods and warrior-classes. Within two centuries their masonic technique was such that to north and south, and far in the deeps of ages yet unborn, they had fame as Toltecs—the Supreme Builders.

Improved in like manner was temple-technique; with it, the ritual calendar inherited from the Maya—a calendar red-spotted in no unsanguinary characters. Human sacrifice was the crown and essence of every feast and festival. Warriors continually led out fresh expeditions in search of captives to feed the altars of Tula, the great Toltec capital; slaves tilled the wide-spreading maize-plantations which supported the great priesthoods; and the fires smoked unendingly on the summits of the pyramidal temples. . . .

This was the scene when, according to the legends collected by the Spanish fathers, town after town of the Toltecs, and finally Tula itself, was peacefully brought under the control of a personage who bore the name or title Quetzalcoatl—the Humming-Bird Snake. A stranger and an alien, none of the diverse accounts vary greatly

in their description of him. He was tall, pale-skinned, black-bearded, and accompanied by other strangers who wore black cassocks 'spotted with red crosses.' For a time the stunned Toltecs appear to have accepted him and his mission with an incredible docility.

That mission, assuming the stranger to have been himself an American Indian, is startling enough to read of in the myths of people who, it must be remembered, did not regard their rites of human sacrifice as shameful orgies of cruelty, but as sheer necessities to ensure the life of the sun and the productivity of the soil. Across the blood-stained Toltec republics, in that continent as yet unapprehended by Europe, Quetzalcoatl marched as a blasphemer and reformer. He forbade human sacrifice—'as an insult to God.' Instead, flowers and fruit were to deck the altars—offerings to the sun 'who himself provided them.' (Strange agnostic sentiment on such a continent and among such a race!)

But he went further, this black-robed reformer dominating for a time the cities of that astounded Amerindian semi-civilisation. War was an abomination—he stopped his ears when he was spoken to of war.' In place of it there was to be cultivation of the arts of peace, and of those arts Quetzalcoatl himself was a master.

He brought new methods of tillage and weaving and metal-working. He reformed the calendar. He instituted a college of priestly 'Followers.' In Tula the hideous idols gazed down on strange sacrifices from orchard and garden where once the screaming captive had been stretched across the concave blocks of black basalt. Immersed in those reforms, Quetzalcoatl took no heed of the fact that Mexico was moving and seething from two causes—Toltec discontent with his teachings and a fresh irruption of barbarian hordes from the north.

Huemac was ruler of Tula and war-chief of the Toltec tribes. For a time vassal and 'Follower' of the pale reformer and blasphemer, the position and reforms alike irked him. He encouraged an alliance of the Toltec party of reaction with the savages from the north. The combined hosts marched on Tula.

News was brought to the Humming-Bird Snake of the armies coming up against him. Thereat, refusing companionship, he left Tula and set out for the sea; which sea, the Pacific or the Gulf of Mexico, is uncertain of identification in the legends. Behind him, the barbarian hordes marched down on Tula, and Huemac, too late, turned to defend the city against his erstwhile allies. Tula

was sacked and burned; perhaps the reformer looked back and saw its flames in the midnight sky.

Legend followed him, dogging his steps on that journey. At one point he halted, and there till the time of the Spanish Conquest an impress of his wearied hand might be seen on a rock. 'And in one spot he bent over a pool and looked at his face in the waters. And he saw that he was old.'

At the sea-coast a raft of serpents awaited him. Embarking, he passed into the setting sun.

Such is a brief synthesis of the legends prevalent at the time of the Spanish Conquests. For, as was soon realised, the legend was not Mexican (Aztec) only. In Tlascala was a God Camaxtli, in Chiapas a Votan, in Guatemala a Gucumatz, in Yucatan a Kukulcan—all four of them with attributes and myths definitely identifying them with the mystic Quetzalcoatl. And among all four nations, as among the Mexicans, the worship of this god had remained a thing apart from the orthodox state religion—a god and a religion by nature unassimilable in Red Indian theology, yet persisting with a strange tenacity.

Three main explanations of the phenomenon of Quetzalcoatl and his mission have been advanced and defended with an astounding wealth of erudition and acerbity. In the first place, the Spaniards had no doubt whatever about the identity of the reformer. He was a Christian missionary; according to Nuñez de la Vega, St. Thomas the Doubter in person. St. Thomas, after converting India, not only voyaged across the Pacific and helped to overthrow an Amerindian Tower of Babel which the sacrilegious natives were building on the Gulf of Mexico, but later returned to Rome, interviewed the Pope on the subject of his labours, and then set out again for the scene of those labours. This fascinating hypothesis is unfortunately rendered valueless by the failure of the Vatican to keep a record of St. Thomas's visit.

There is a *variorum* reading of the Christian claim: Quetzalcoatl must have been a Nestorian missionary. Nestorians early wandered far afield in the Far East; and whence the black cloaks spotted with red crosses but from some Christian descent on the Pacific Coast?

The crosses, however, appear in only one legend—Camaxtli's; whatever the colour of the cloaks, the crosses are undoubtedly politic superimpositions of the Spanish fathers. Further, no

Christian missionary of any Church would have temporised with alien gods, contemptuously and indifferently, as did Quetzalcoatl.

The hunt went on. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indefatigably posed, questioned and read the riddle of this Occidental Sphinx. Quetzalcoatl was variously identified as a Carthaginian, a Welshman, and an Irishman. Each identification, so soon as made, lapsed into disrepute, in spite of constant assertions that Welsh-speaking, Irish-speaking tribes were to be found on the North American continent (the Carthaginians did no more than flaunt their beards from the temple-walls of Chichen-itza). The method of identification was no doubt generally pursued in the best of faith, but awoke serious doubts as to credibility. To identify a Red Indian tribe with the ancient Hibernians on the strength of the well-known Irish ejaculation 'bedad' being almost exactly similar to the tribal 'bagat'—the name, say, for a porcupine—was ingenious, but unsatisfying.

In the early nineteenth century the sun-myth hypothesis burst in splendour on the archæological world. The record of its rise and fall is one of the most amazing things in human speculation. Nearly everything, human, divine and demoniac, could be traced in origin to a sun-myth—an anthropomorphic explanation of the sun's passage across the heavens, his positioning and power with the waxing and waning of the seasons. Applied to Ancient Egyptian and Babylonian myth, it reduced the gods to ashes, laid low Red Riding Hood and Osiris in one fell swoop, and then descended upon the New World, with Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, the great Americanist, the wielder of the sun-bolt. First of victims on the American continent was Quetzalcoatl.

He was the sun. Pallid, as is the dawn, he came on the dark night of Toltec barbarism. He brought gifts, he ripened the fruits and flowers. He reigned supreme: the noonday sun. He grew old, and the hosts of darkness gathered against him: late afternoon. He returned to the sea—and saw that his face was old: the sunset. Kukulcan, Camaxtli, and all the other variants of the myth were not products of slightly varied records of the advent of a single human personality. They were myths explanatory of natural phenomena, separately built up by separate peoples, and owing points of similarity to no better reason than the similarity of the phenomena dealt with.

It is probable that future ages will speak of the sun-myth dogma as itself a myth. At its noonday splendour, however, few dared

attack it. On the modern American continent, where there is a Monroe doctrine in archæology as well as in politics, it attained enthusiastic acceptance. Earnest museum experts, North American and Latin American, whose ancestors had massacred the native populations as brutish savages, defended with astounding vigour the ability of each of those populations to evolve unaided a complicated mystic and mysterious symbolism to explain to itself satisfactorily the ordinary phenomena of the heavens! Famines, it is said, were common in ancient Mexico and Yucatan. And this is little to be wondered at, for, absorbed in the manufacture and study of these stupendous sun-myths, the Central American peasants could have had but little leisure in which to till their maize-fields.

Few sciences are static, however, and archæology, that handmaid of history, still wielded her spade vigorously while listening in docile agreement to the sun-mystics. And gradually, out of her labours of ground-excavation coupled with research among the documents of the early Spanish fathers, certain facts emerged :

The fall of Tula of the Toltecs under Huemac was probably an actual historical event. For, about the same year in which the legend of the Humming-Bird Snake may be dated (c. A.D. 950), the neighbouring peninsula of Yucatan felt the effects of the Toltec debacle. A great refugee migration of Toltecs appears to have drifted southwards through the Tehuantepec neck and there heard something of the riches and splendour of Yucatan. Acquiring a leader, transforming themselves from a drift into an invading host, the Toltecs descended on the coast of Yucatan, captured the seaport of Champoton, marched inland, and took the great Maya city of Chichen-itza.

Now, the leader in question was Topiltzin Axcitl Quetzalcoatl—an astounding outrage in polysyllables at which even the Maya balked, contenting themselves with translating the last name into Kukulcan. He was obviously a general named after a god, not the god himself, but it is not too great a stretch of probability to imagine Topil as member of some family which had known the mystic Feathered Serpent in the flesh.

Indeed, the Toltecs were more than invaders; they were missionaries spreading the creed of Quetzalcoatl. But it had suffered a sea-change. Quetzalcoatl was introduced to the conquered Maya, who had long eschewed human sacrifice themselves, as the greatest of gods, albeit alien, and one who demanded constant

sacrifice of human hearts. The rites were accepted, God Kukulcan became and remained in Yucatan a high favourite long after the Toltecs had disappeared, *and, side by side with the ferocious forms of his worship was still kept alive the story of his gentleness, his agnosticism, his hatred of war and bloodshed!*

But now comes the crux of the story, as revealed by modern research. Those Toltec invaders under Topil did not introduce a new religion alone. They brought their characteristic arts and crafts. They reared new types of palaces, pillared and pilastered in styles unknown to the Maya. Squat little atlantean figures supported the roofs and doorways; above those doorways appeared stone screens of lattice-work. The Maya civilisations, both Old and New Empire, had been civilisations built with stone tools; the invading Toltecs brought copper and bronze implements to the peninsula. Sculpture had long died out among the Maya; the Toltecs revived it—something different in both concept and technique from anything of the Old Empire Maya, as the modern traveller may find by examining the walls of Chichen-itza and comparing them with earlier Palenque. The Toltecs have left in Yucatan evidences obliterated by the barbarians in their own land of Mexico—evidences of having absorbed details from a civilisation not only extremely advanced, but *extra-American*.

And that extra-American origin, if one is to accept the very plain proofs, was Eastern Asiatic—from Cochin-China or Cambodia through the medium, presumably, of the Philippines and Hawaii. Sculptural motif and decoration in the Toltec temples in Yucatan are so closely paralleled in ruined Funan of Cambodia (where Buddhist sculpture was at its zenith from the sixth to the eighth centuries A.D.) that it is impossible to doubt their common inspiration. Some time, as early perhaps as the days of the Maya Old Empire, stray sailors from Eastern Asia found their way across the wide surfs of the Pacific, landing astounded on the unknown coasts of Central America. They came back again throughout the centuries—though in no great numbers, one is to presume. Here and there, on the Mexican coast, they may even have had trading stations. Cortes states that on the Pacific seaboard Aralco saw ships 'which had pelicans of gold and silver at the prow, also merchandise; and they thought they were from Cathay and from China, because the sailors of the ships gave them to understand by signs that they had had a journey of thirty days.'

This Asiatic-Amerindian intercourse was probably limited

enough. Yet it seems to have continued into the time of the Aztecs who replaced the vanished Toltecs. The Aztec chess-game *patolli* is almost certainly the Indian *pachesi*. So is the Aztec turban Indian, and so, perhaps, the Aztec skill in gold-work. The Old World sprayed an intermittent cultural stream on the sea-board of the New. Eastern Asia witnessed invasions and upsets enough of its own for the memory of the far trading posts among the Red Men to be occasionally forgotten for centuries, perhaps, and then rediscovered. Or in Central America cataclysms of racial migration and inter-tribal war may have led to massacres of the traders; so that many years might elapse before another venture-some ship, Chinese or Javanese junk, came sailing out of the sunset to trade with some feather-cloaked American cacique of the coasts.

On the intellectual and religious life of the ancient Americans this trade apparently left no trace at all—*unless it be that Quetzalcoatl was the Buddha.*

The reasons for belief in early communication between Asia and America have been enumerated, the life of the Feathered Serpent sketched. Was he the Buddha—to whom he bears, even in Amerindian dress, such striking resemblances—or perhaps some Buddhist missionary? Is the tale of Quetzalcoatl the tale of Gautama translated from the hill-slopes and jungles of India to the hill-slopes and jungles of Mexico?

It follows close parallels. The Feathered Serpent's indifference to the gods is Gautama's agnosticism; his organisation of a special priesthood is the institution of the begging monks; his dislike of war and his half-contemptuous injunctions concerning fruit and flower sacrifices—these are of the stuff of that philosophy expounded in the Deer Park of Benares a thousand years before the burning of Tula half a world away. And the Mexican spirit-journey is, modified scarcely at all, the wanderings of the soul in the Buddhist purgatory. . . .

On the other hand, the account of Quetzalcoatl's arrival from the west—a thoughtless act which definitely spokes the wheels of the sun-myth chariot—his pallid-faced, bearded followers of like kind to himself, his bringing of new arts and crafts, his absorption in these to the neglect of his growing unpopularity—all suggest the adventurings of an actual human being, some lost Cambodian philosopher-savant-missionary, rather than the transplanted adventures of the Indian Buddha.

Strange last avatar of Sakya Muni if either of these hypotheses enshrine some vestige of the truth! For perhaps, long years after the Toltec republic was a myth among the Aztecs and kindred tribes, some other Buddhist wanderer came to Mexican shores and was made prisoner, and carried to Mexico City, and in some cell of the Quetzalcoatl temple recognised words and forms that went with adoration of the Master and the Eightfold Path. Or, in the open air, witnessed the hideous ceremony at some altar when the heart of the sacrifice was torn out and held to the lips of the grinning idol—Gautama. . . .

Buddha or Buddhist, it is doubtful if in all the history of religion there was ever such ironic counter-climax as that!

One may close with a suggestion and a prophecy: That the last word, all other speculations apart, is still with the angel Moroni; and that, among students of Ancient America at least, there is little likelihood of a great influx into the Church of Latter-Day Saints until the inspirer of the Book of Mormon descends again from the astral planes, summons a committee of archæologists, and hands them definite instructions as to where lie re-buried those plates which no doubt elucidate the mystery of America's Buddha.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE . . .

BY F. CAMERON SILLAR.

I

*Letter written to his Mother by Captain Ambrose Poultney, D.S.O.,
while lying in the Base Hospital, Etaples, in 1916.*

'MY DEAR MOTHER,—

To be vouchsafed a D.S.O. does *not* constitute one a hero—so do please forget the word. As a matter of fact, apart from a stroke of luck, I had little to do with it myself. The other fellows did most of the winning of it.

What poor letters mine must have been that you can still ask "What is it like out there?" But you must not imagine that we live all the time in a kind of twilight. We are extremely natural—more so than at home.

Sometimes our gaiety is forced—in periods of strain—but we live for the moment and take delight in small things. We are a set of Mark Tapleys without being too conscious of it.

On getting back from leave, one's welcome is anything but perfunctory. This is what happened when I got back just before the show :

"There's old Bill! Any news, Bill?"

"Is Blighty still as fair, Bill?"

"Bill, have a drink?"

"How dam' clean the blighter looks."

"The lice are still starving, Bill. Come and sit close to Uncle Dick, there's a good boy."

"What a hell of a row you're all making."

"You wicked old devil, Bill, to speak to your nice kind friends so—Blighty and a brass hat don't seem to suit you."

"Seriously, Bill, did you meet that peach in 'Apple Blossoms'—Betty. . . . Betty. . . . Was she nice to you, Bill?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Blighty ain't good for you, Bill. Or Betty ain't. Or both. Is she still singing

'Left, Right! Left, Right. LEFT, RIGHT!

CHEERIO!

Nighty-night, dear boys, nighty-night!

"There's the Major. Major dear, here's Bill back from Blighty in a foul temper—with Betty's kisses hot on his . . . All right, Bill, all right. I won't go on. Sorrowing hearts have all my sympathy. It's only my fun—it's only news we want."

"I've brought you some news, boys."

"Have you, Major?"

"Plaguey rotten news, *I'll* bet."

"How old is it, Major?"

"There's to be a Divisional raid to-morrow night."

"What? Where?"

"Will Bill be in it? Thank God, no more feather beds for you, my son."

"The Boche is building a string of eight block-houses up there on the other side of the river. We've got to get over and have a go at blowing 'em up."

"But Major, we can't get across the river unless we make a full-dress affair of it. Why, it would take a week to get ready. Pontoons and rafts and what not. And you say to-morrow night! The Butcher's got the blood lust good and proper!"

"Yes, to-morrow night. It's Bill's fault. He's gone and found a ford."

"A ford? Oh, Bill! And you just back from Blighty!"

"Stop rotting a minute—this is interesting. Where's your ford, Bill? And how did you find it?"

"Well, you know X Farm. If you go down past X Farm and round by Cavendish Corner, it must be just below where that ditch runs into the river—we'll have to make sure of the place to-night."

"Well, but how did you find it?"

"He found it in some old tome unearthed from his Aunt Jane's lumber room—some military-minded old death's-head made a note of it in the year dot."

"It's supposed to be marked with a large square stone with the letters PONTIN on it."

"By George, I believe I know that stone, though I've never seen any letters on it. So that marks a ford, does it? Well, it ought to be a cushy job to get over there. The Boches have no more idea of its existence than we had a few minutes ago. Congrattars, Bill."

"Bill and I are going to mark down the place after dinner. Sergeant Robins had better be detailed to come along with us with a dozen men."

"Right, Major. Thank God, here's dinner at last. But what grub! We'd do better in the front line. Marie, what's for dinner to-night? No. Qu'est ce que nous allons manger ce soir, Marie?"

"Escallopes de veau Piccadilly, M. le Capitaine."

"O Mon Dieu, Marie, il y avait la même chose hier soir."

"Oui, Monsieur le Capitaine."

"Et il y a deux jours?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Capitaine."

"Voyez donc, escallopes de veau toujours. C'est affreux. . . ."

"Oh, stow it for goodness' sake. N'importe, Marie. Tout le monde t'adore. And we've got some damn good Scotch. Come on, Bill. . . ."

You will gather from the above, perhaps, how one insignificant part of the great British Army behaves. I expect you will say to yourself "How he puts off coming to the point." Well, no man that I know likes to recount how he won a decoration—self-consciousness perhaps, but I would rather call it a decent reticence.

However—

The official *communiqué* will have told you how the attack developed and succeeded to an extent we had not expected. The ford proved simple and our fellows reached the opposite bank without the Boches suspecting anything. Naturally we were keeping them busy at the other end of the line.

But you know, it is so extraordinary that my habit of browsing in the library as a boy should lead directly to a successful show like this.

We managed to scale the steep bluffs on the opposite bank. The Boches in their trenches at the top were utterly surprised and ran like rabbits. But we were held up by machine guns mounted in a blockhouse like a miniature martello tower.

If we were to get any further and consolidate what we had won, the wretched thing had to be blown up or captured. A staff officer is not supposed to go in for that sort of adventure, but the staff get so many kicks for being behind the line that—well, the Major and I took on the job. While he with four or five men made a *détour* to get to the rear of the fort, I crawled along rather visibly towards it in front. This is the first degree of cunning and what one might call a straightforward kind of deception. Fortunately, it came off and the Major was able to put the fort out of action undisturbed while I got the blighty that's bringing

me home again for a bit—and the D.S.O. which the Major should have had. So now you know it all. Still, I rather bless dear old Grandfather-to-the-tenth-power Wilfred for leading me to the ford.

The Sister tells me I have written enough for to-day. She says you may expect me home in less than a week.

Your affectionate son,

AMBROSE.

II

Extract from the Letters of Sir Wilfred Poulton, Knight, to his Grandson, in the year 1465.

‘And so we rode out of Peronne about midday bound for the North. My friend Charles de Trafford commanded the troop and I was his second.

The Army, you will remember, had landed at Harfleur in September. It was now the third sennight in October and autumn rains made many of the roads well-nigh impassable, yet I had thoughts of high adventure which would not be banished by the unkind weather. I was to have my fill at Agincourt, though of that anon, albeit my share in the battle was to be but a small one.

When you come to read these pages you will, as I design, be in your nineteenth year. Forget to think of me as the old man you remember—think of me as but little older than yourself. As such I wish you to know the good and the bad that were in me.

You will have come to the understanding from reading these pages, that I have found the true experience of life to lie in the common happenings and not in the great events. For great events are known by few, while common happenings are the portion of all, and so being, join ordinary folk together.

Be that as it may, nevertheless, I, being then in my twenty-third year, sought adventure and importuned Harry the King to despatch me with Charles in advance of the Army.

“But keep out of mischief, Will,” the King said, laughing. “Remember Beauvais!”

And so we left Peronne. But Charles was not slow to take his chance of grumbling and lecturing. And yet I would not have you think him anything but a good soldier. And as we rode:

“I hate this country,” said Charles, “most of all at this time of year, with all the rivers running like sluices.”

“Oh, October’s a friend, Charles, if you take her the right

way. We're heading for the North and the enemy's before us. If we go on at this speed we shall be home before Christmas."

"What? Over the Channel, with the Constable d'Albret between us and the sea? You're hopeful, Will, or the King has more warcraft than I've given him credit for. To march as we have done through a distracted country bearing with us no supplies—well, our star's a lucky one."

"We have great tales to tell them at home, anyway."

"My dear Will, you're a young devil with no thought for to-morrow—except to hope for another mad prank. Never shall I forget that girl at Beauvais."

"And never shall I forgive you for playing her that trick, Charles."

"You'll thank me for it as soon as we see home again—an ordinary little pot-house wench."

"Charles, you're disgusting. She was enchanting."

"Enchanting—true—most true. But to have married her!—But I'll not go over it all again."

"Generous, Charles!—you may be right—I'll not admit that you are—but you may be right that to marry her would have been folly——!"

"Folly! Good God, Will——"

"—but what I complain of is the trick you played me——"

"It was 'the trick I played *her*' a minute ago!"

"—by lying to her that I had a wife at home. What a cur she must have thought me!"

"Believe me, Will, I knew what I was doing. Sir John would never have forgiven me if I'd let you get entangled with a wench like that. Aha! I suppose that must be Albert. How far are we ahead of the Army, Ponting?"

"About an hour, Captain, I think. But that looks like a messenger coming up from the rear, sir."

"So it is—I wonder what's his news?"

"Captain de Trafford, sir?"

"Yes."

"A letter from the King, Captain."

"Hm . . . hm . . . No rest for us in Albert to-night, Will. I suppose the King had left Peronne before he sent this, messenger?"

"Yes, Captain, the Army marches but three miles behind you, sir."

"Does it, in truth? The King wastes no time and we must make more speed if we are to mask the Army properly.

"We are to push on beyond Albert, move up the right bank of the Ancre until we find a ford which is marked by some large stone on the bank, hold the ford and carry out a reconnaissance to the north-eastward.

"D'Albret is thought to have sent a large troop of horse to surprise us on the flank."

"Craving your pardon, Captain, I know that ford. My folk came from these parts many years back. As a young lad, my father brought me here when he came on some matter of an inheritance. He showed me the stone at the ford which bears our name graven on it."

"Lead the way then, Ponting. Is it far up?"

"Not over half an hour."

"Good. Martin, take three troopers and buy or seize food in Albert and follow on as fast as you can. And, Martin, there's too much veal in this pestilent country. Raid a chicken run, and bring wine. . . .

"Well, Will, no caressing sheets to-night!"

"Tut, Charles, I'm as hard as you are—what do I care for sheets?"

"Well, I must confess I miss a good bed at night. Wonderful what a difference it makes to a man's work. A night on the ground always leaves me as stiff as a board, and in the morning my ill-humour is past bearing . . . it looks as if the ford might be by those willows, Ponting."

"'Tis but round the next bend, Captain."

"Thank God for that, anyway."

For a time we rode in silence. The fine rolling country put me in mind of the Kentish Downs. A narrow valley with bluffs rising steeply some distance from the stream flowing in the midst.

I rode ahead with Ponting who had known the terrain in earlier adventures, the telling of which was so much to his liking that had I not kept a watch upon the bank of the river we should have passed the place.

"There's a large square stone, Charles. Here—Ponting, 'tis here, surely. Look, Charles, no one would guess there was a ford there were it not marked."

"By the Lord you're right, Will. 'Tis the ford in truth. Is that some lettering graven on the stone?"

"Yes, the letters seem to be PONTIN. Some fellow carved his name, I'll wager."

"'Tis our name as I told you, sir."

"So it is, Ponting. Note it in your tablets, Will. 'Tis strange how often such matters of no seeming import can be turned to good account. Ponting, bring a few troopers. We'll cross the ford and reconnoitre. Will, see to the bivouac. . . . *Au 'voir.*"

And so they splashed through the shallows, the harness flashing and jingling, as pretty a sight as ever I saw.

Meanwhile I set the men to prepare the bivouac and myself drew out in my tablets a plan of the place—'twill show you how the bank dipped steeply to the river on the other side but shelved an easy ascent or descent on ours.

I had but just finished when, with a sound of galloping hooves, back came Charles and his ten troopers, crashing through the willows with a hundred men-at-arms at their heels.

"Into your saddles!" shouted Charles—and we needed no second command. It seemed but a moment while Charles and his men turned and charged on the French, checking them, to give us time. Then they turned and plunged into the ford, Charles at the rear. The French drew rein as they saw that we were double their number.

As Charles drew near to our bank a bolt from a cross-bow struck him and he fell from his horse. But I, with another, dashed into the stream and drew him to the bank.

"Will," he gasped, "lay me down. I cannot last more than a little. Seize the ford for the King. You cannot hold it on this shore—there is a strong narrow place on the top of the bluff by that lone pine-tree. It can be held against five hundred men."

I had but time to kiss him ere he fell back dead.

I would have waited by him, but dared not. 'Twas no easy matter to seize the ford against the French men-at-arms. But the thought of Charles and his brave words gave us each the strength of ten. Yet we charged up the steep bank opposite a dozen times ere we drove the French before us.

As Charles had said, we found the narrow place and seized it, strengthening it with earthworks and branches till night fell.

Ponting I sent back with a despatch for the King and others to bear Charles back to the Army.

All that night we held the defile.

About the second hour I lay to sleep for a little, when in a moment as it seemed I opened my eyes to find one standing over me insistent that I should wake. It was one who had a better right to insist than any in the Army.

"Wake up, Will."

"Sire!" I cried, springing up.

"I told you to keep out of mischief, Will, but your mischief to-night has been worth an army to me. I shall catch the Constable a day before he expected me, before M. de Rohan's troops can join him. And then, who knows? To be home before Christmas!"

The part I played at Agincourt gave me no greater joy than this speech of King Harry's.

III

Taken from a letter written at Nemetacum¹ in Gaul in the year 55 B.C. by Q. Sempronius Pontinus to Volumnia his wife in Rome

'You will be pining for news of the campaign as I am for yours and for the gossip of Rome. To-day is the first opportunity I have had for letter-writing for many days, my last having been despatched from Samarobriva.

Firstly, congratulate me. Cæsar has given me my cohort. I feel it a great honour, for he promoted me in the field. One can have no doubt whatever of his extraordinary ability. He is a great man and I firmly believe is the only one capable of rescuing Rome from the present political chaos.

On leaving Samarobriva I was still in command of the seventh company of the third cohort and I was ordered to proceed in advance of the Tenth Legion to a point about ten miles up the River Ecrembatis where Cæsar intended to encamp for the first night of his march on Nemetacum in the country of the Atrebatas. They say he is contemplating an invasion of Britain and Nemetacum is on one of the main routes to the north coast of Gaul. But this is of course secret. Near where the first camp was to be was

¹ Nemetacum = Arras; Samarobriva = Amiens (city of the Ambiani); Ecrembatis = Ancre; Samara = Somme; Lutetia = Paris; Axona = Aisne.

a small hamlet where I was to arrange for the billeting of the officers and the establishment of the Prætorium.

I had barely finished when Cæsar (with the legion) arrived and took up his quarters. I managed to see that he was reasonably comfortable and then slipped away to show Marius his billet—you remember Publius Marius, on Cæsar's staff—he married Cotta's second girl. He and I got on well together and often managed to share a billet. The road through the village, if it could be called a road, was a mass of potholes full of water and Marius cursed as he stepped into one in the darkness.

"My *dear* Pontinus," he said, "this is the end of the world you've brought us to! I hope to goodness you've picked a good billet."

"Not so bad, Marius. But you fellows on the staff are so absurdly particular. Give me a chap who's been to a Greek University for finickiness—splitting hairs and looking after your clothes—that's all they teach you. I must say I believe in the good old Roman methods of education."

"You're as uncompromising as a Gracchus, Pontinus! All I want is some decent cooking and a soft bed. I can't keep my mind fresh for my work if I don't have a good night on a soft bed."

"Well, these Gallic folk can cook you know. That little fairy (don't worry, my dear) that looked after us in Lutetia, now. D'you remember those briocas?"

"Oh, yes, I remember. But her pastry! I was in the hands of the regimental dentist for months afterwards. No, no, give me good sound Roman food. I remember——"

"I know—Lucullus's lampreys. Those lampreys give me a pain even now. What a glutton the man is!"

"Gastronome, not glutton. But don't let's talk food. We must keep our minds clear for our work."

"You and your work, Marius! Does a Staff Officer ever do any work? You never think of us poor devils in the line.—Ah, here we are."

I greeted the good lady in whose cottage we were to sleep—one of the two or three houses in the village that boasted more than one room.

She replied with a flood of Ambianic; we were not yet out of the country of the Ambiani.

"What does she say, Pontinus? I never can make head or tail of their cursed lingo."

"Sorry, old man. I forgot you were on the Staff. She says it's so wet that the gods themselves are weeping for France."

"France? What's that?"

"Oh, it's their latest name for Gaul, you know."

"Well, I don't like it. But never mind—introduce me, old chap."

I performed the duty with great ceremony and much bowing and scraping. Such behaviour is *de rigueur* in this strange country. Again there was a flood of Ambianic.

"What does she say?"

"She says she's rude to keep us standing in the rain and will we please come in. Hullo, what's this? A message from the Prætorium?"

"Yes, sir. For Publius Marius, sir. From the General."

"Yes, by Jove! This is Cæsar's own fist and we've only just left him. Just wait a second, orderly. Hm! . . . Hm! . . . Hades! What is the old man up to? A night march on a night like this? He must be mad—or it's that interfering devil Pollio that's pushed him into it. Another night out!"

"Cæsar's a hard nut, but he does know his job."

"I know—I'm only grousing. But seriously, it's a pretty awful prospect. Night work's a chancy business. I say, where's that old dame off to in such a hurry? D'you think she understood me? Orderly, catch that old party and bring her back. Look, Pontinus, she's seen him and taken to her heels. Lord, if he doesn't catch her, Cæsar'll catch *me*. There! Thank God, he's got her."

"You're quick, Marius. I'll say that for you. I'd never have noticed her."

"I'd get the sack pretty quick if I didn't keep my weather eye open. The old man doesn't like bungling. Now, Madame, I see you understand Latin. Where were you off to just now?"

The old party looked enquiringly from Marius to me and back to Marius.

"Come now, you understand me well enough. You were going—where?"

She shook her head and answered in rapid Ambianic.

"She says she doesn't understand you."

"Well, Pollio'll know how to deal with her. Orderly, take this lady to the guard-room."

Voluble protests.

"To the guard-room, orderly."

More protests.

"I thought so. The Master of Horse will know how to make you speak, Madame. Now to the Prætorium—you'll get detailed orders later, Pontinus. But you might get your Company a mile or so out along the road to—to—I've forgotten its outlandish name——?"

"Nemetacum, d'you mean?"

"Yes, that's it. By the way, poor Cicero's nephew's killed. In a scrap with some rebellious Remi down on the Axona. But I mustn't keep Cæsar waiting. I wonder what he's got for dinner—veal, I expect, or some beastly coarse fish from the Samara. Never mind, he's got some vintage Falernian—73, you know. Well, cheerio!"

Marius departed to sup with the mighty, while I hurried off to snatch a meal of pickled sausages and cold water before getting my Company on the move again.

The night was very dark and I can tell you that the thought of a night march did not attract me. The men had hardly got into harness when orders came from the Master of Horse that we were to act as advance guard—the nastiest of all jobs in night manœuvres in a country of barbarians—still, it showed Cæsar trusted my judgment. The real danger was the possibility of an attack on our right from over the River Ecrembatis. The Atrebatæ knew the fords and we did not.

You can see that the responsibility on me was heavy. The security of the army largely depended on our watchfulness. There is no one like Cæsar for getting you out of a tight corner. But it was my business to see that we didn't get into one.

Just as we were starting Marius came hurrying up. Cæsar had given him leave to march with me, he said, to see that I didn't get into mischief that night. Poor fellow, he did not guess that it would be his last.

We marched for two or three hours taking every precaution and conversing in whispers. Marius told me he thought of retiring to a farm in Britain after the campaign. He fell in love with the country last year when he and I attended Pollio on a mission. What Terentia would have said I do not know. I can conceive of no more dismal banishment. Besides, the people are dour and untrustworthy and possess a most perverted sense of humour. You remember the story of the centurion and the pig's bladder

—well, that's typical Britannic humour. Now, to buy a nice little farm in this country—say, somewhere between here and Samarobriwa—would be very pleasant. Let me know what you think.

About midnight the moon came up and made every tree cast a shadow like a barbarian. The men became rather jumpy and I had to command silence sternly more than once. About an hour after moonrise we were marching by a wide bend of the river where the stream appeared to be markedly deep and strong when Marius suddenly stopped dead. The Company came to a halt and we all stood straining our ears and eyes. I could hear nothing but the river gurgling. But Marius whispered that he was certain he had seen two or three men crossing the stream just beyond the bend. I pointed out that the river was quite unfordable there, but Marius insisted and we therefore crawled towards the point at which he thought he had seen something. On getting close to the river I saw at once how deceptive the current was in appearance. At close quarters the place was clearly seen to be, if not a regular ford, at least a shallow where passage would not be difficult. So Marius's two or three men became uncomfortably probable.

I determined to cross the ford with ten men to search the opposite bank and look over the top of the bluff which rose about three hundred paces back from the stream. But Marius argued so earnestly that I should not leave my command, but that I should let him go instead, that I could not but give way.

The rest of the tale is shortly told. Marius with his men crossed the river easily. I stood on the bank in great doubt. I am not a religious man, but I am convinced that some god watching over me made me suspicious of serious danger and led me to deploy the Company. Had I not done so history might have been different, for scarcely had I the Company in fighting formation before a horde of Atrebates appeared on the opposite shore driving Marius before them. Marius tried to rally his men for a moment on the bank, but he was instantly struck down and only three men managed to struggle back to the Company.

Meanwhile, the barbarians swarmed on the opposite bank; I reckoned they numbered at least twelve hundred men and their numbers were being added to every minute. I sent a runner back to Caesar who was still a mile behind, and prepared to ford the river to attack the enemy.

We crossed the stream with ease albeit under a hail of stones and arrows, and fought our way steadily, driving the barbarians before us. Yet they fought with Gallic courage and contested every step. At one point I began to think they had fought us to a standstill, but luckily, just as I was getting anxious, they broke suddenly and ran. We drove them before us with great slaughter until at last we found ourselves in command of a narrow defile leading out into open country. And this I determined to hold until Cæsar should arrive.

Within a quarter of an hour he was by my side. The affair at the ford led him to change his plan of marching directly on Nemetacum and he determined to make a wide detour, falling on the city from the east. This had been made possible by the seizure of the ford and the bluff beyond. Standing by me, Cæsar said with that charming smile that few can resist, "Pontinus, your conduct of this little affair has been exemplary. I wish I had seen the storming of the ford. Had you decided to wait for me, their numbers would have become too great for even the Legion to force a passage. By the way, I have commanded the Standard Bearer of the 3rd Cohort to attend you."

In this way did Cæsar inform me of my promotion in the field. Then :

"See that the ford is marked, Pontinus. Set a great stone by it and mark it

Hic mortuus est Publius Marius."

This I did, but Cæsar caused to be added,

*et flumen Ecrembatem transiit
Q. Sempronius Pontinus.*

And thus I have achieved fame.

Ever your loving husband,
QUINTUS.'

DOUGHTY THE MAN.

BY ERIC DIBBEN.

IT is common ground among readers of *Arabia Deserta* that the book reveals in its author one of the most extraordinary characters in the history of travel. In the difficult and dangerous country where men like Seetzen, Burckhardt, Wallin, Burton and Palgrave journeyed after long and studious preparation, Doughty adventured with scarcely any premeditation or concern. He set out to risk his life in copying inscriptions which he would not be able to decipher. By using scientific instruments, asking all manner of questions and writing down the minutest details of his observation and experience he courted from day to day the violent resentment of an ignorant and suspicious race. In the assumed, but honest calling of a physician, he ignored the careful precepts of Palgrave. He went as a Christian among peoples fanatically hostile to any religion but that of El Islam—though himself an agnostic. For the space of twenty-one months he defied every canon of the adventurer's law but that of courage, yet lived to enshrine his journey in a masterpiece of literature. Was there ever so strange a character or one that so excites our desire to understand the mind of its possessor?

Doughty's Arabian adventure filled barely two years in a life which was to stretch beyond four score, but it is almost solely by the events of that brief span that he is known. Seldom is any part of a man's life so sharply divided from all that went before or followed, that in after days he can look back upon that one period and see his own image as though it were another's. Yet this journey, seen in retrospect, assumed in Doughty's book that remote and even epical character to which distinguished commentators have drawn attention. In Arabia he was known as *Khalil*: in the volumes written up from his notes in the nine years following his return we find Doughty 'looking back,' as Professor Barker Fairley has said, 'at Khalil.' And if Doughty himself was able to view Khalil's adventures with as much detachment as, say, Aircraftsman Shaw may be supposed to regard the exploits of Colonel Lawrence, it is not surprising that a reader of *Arabia Deserta*, astonished already by the singularity alike of the journey

and of the book, should find a source of added perplexity in the gulf which appears to separate both from the main course of the traveller's life.

The late Dr. D. G. Hogarth, to whose *Life of Charles M. Doughty* alone we owe our knowledge of his earlier and later years, has marked this gulf by referring to his subject always as Khalil in Arabia and as Doughty elsewhere. To imply a miraculous duality of character, however, is not to solve the puzzle which that character presents, and the distinction drawn by Dr. Hogarth is open to the danger of obscuring this issue by almost making it seem that we have two different persons to consider. It is nearly as though, by a Pirandellian twist of fancy, Khalil were seen as a being shaped in Doughty's mind and mysteriously informed with a separate life of his own. Let us therefore remind ourselves at the outset that in plain fact Doughty the traveller was of flesh and blood, one and the same man who as a boy wanted to enter the Navy and was rejected on medical grounds; who went to school and university like others; who, some time after his return from Arabia, married and had children and lived at Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne; who devoted the last forty years of his life to the writing of poetry which nobody reads; who received the highest honour open to an explorer at so late a date that by all reasonable expectation he should long since have been dead; who treasured throughout his life the traditions of an ancient family, and died on the 20th January, 1926, aged eighty-two, at Sissinghurst in Kent.

On what thread, then, are we to string together the separate portions of a life so strangely divided? How may we trace its consistent secret? Whatever the effects of Doughty's plunge from one environment into another and back again, can we not find in the child, the youth, some hidden pointers to the peculiar qualities which were to be revealed in the Doughty of 1876-8? Can we not discover, in the fifty years which followed his journey, some token of the greatness manifest in his unexampled adventure?

Briefly, Doughty's early history ran thus. Born in 1843 and orphaned before he was seven years old, C. M., the younger of two brothers, was sent by his guardian-uncle to school first at Laleham, then at Elstree, and then at Southsea. Shy and overgrown, he met with less favour among boys than with the masters, who considered him a promising candidate for the Navy. Soon after his rejection for the Service, he was committed to the care of a

tutor in France, mainly devoting his holidays at home to solitary rambling in search of geological specimens. At eighteen he went up to Caius.

As in schooldays, so in his undergraduate years Doughty seems hardly to have made a friend. Kind, nervous, polite, he must nevertheless have lacked every quality that would draw to him any but the most sensitively alert among his fellows. He took no part in sport or games. Reserved and aloof, he awaited perhaps the kindly advance that never came. There can be little doubt that he was felt by his companions to be a bore, and still less that he was one. '*Too Gothic, my dear!*' the Topsy of that day might have remarked to her Mr. Haddock.

Even in his studies Doughty posed a problem. His was one of those minds that can learn but cannot be taught. In his first year he read a paper before the British Association. At the end of his second he sought the comparative freedom from lectures and chapel which at that time was to be found at Downing, and was even able to break the course of his academic studies by a visit to remote glaciers in Norway. A further paper read, on his return, before the British Association, was followed by a Second Class in the Natural Sciences Tripos, and it was with little regret that Doughty quitted the uncongenial atmosphere of undergraduate life. There followed two or three quiet years' reading in London and at Oxford, and then, about 1870, he embarked on a period of leisurely travelling which led him, in turn, to Holland, Spain, North Africa, Italy and Greece.

Early in 1874 there came to Doughty, tramping in the Morea, the thought that it was time to return to England. He was thirty, had seen something of foreign lands, and must have nearly completed that study of Spenser and other early writers, to which he had been devoting the greater portion of his time. Should he not now go back? For some unexplained reason he turned instead to Syria and Palestine, and so to Cairo. A long-standing interest in geology set him wandering, with Arab guides, in the Sinai mountains, whence the sandstone sepulchres of Petra, first visited by Burckhardt, drew him to Transjordan. There he heard of the reputed rock-cities, Medain Salih, with their strange inscriptions, and resolved to visit them. A year of weary impatience was to pass before he could go, but in November, 1876, we find him in Damascus on the point of setting out.

It is when we look back across the Arabian journey and the

book which followed and see the thirty-two-year-old Doughty standing, unknown to himself, on the brink of both, that we are impressed most deeply by the utter improbability of either. His general health was poor. His eyesight was far from good. He had a slight impediment of speech. Influence and money were lacking. His academic studies had been concerned entirely with science, not at all with languages. No published work, save his paper on certain glaciers in Norway, existed to indicate a habit of accurate observation, to suggest any hidden reserve of physical endurance or to reveal any literary talent whatever. 'What moved thee,' we ask, joining with the 'new voice of an old friend' met in Damascus after the traveller's return, 'what moved thee or how couldst thou take such journeys into the fanatic Arabia?'

For answer we turn again to *Arabia Deserta*. Closely read, Doughty's book reveals not a part, but the whole of the man. Underlying his conscious purpose of advancing science and his own country's reputation therein, first by copying the inscriptions at Medain Salih and then by investigating a little known country and its people, we find that deeper unconscious motive-power which places him among those travellers of whom, as of Colonel Lawrence, Sir Andrew Macphail has said: 'They travel because they can write.' In *Arabia Deserta* that impulse to write—the impulse felt by the born artist in letters—finds expression in chapter upon chapter, from beginning to end of the book, so perfectly blending the artistic with the scientific fruit of the journey, that the two are inseparable.

Now, the impulse to write, like every other urge to creative art, is fundamentally an impulse felt by the artist to make something clear to himself. His subject may be a face or an idea or a country; his art-form a picture, a play or a book. In nearly every case his prime task is to make plain, to simplify. The mind that conceives on a grand scale must simplify exceedingly in analysis, whatever complexities his ultimate synthesis may introduce into his work. When his subject is a whole country, where is he to begin, where to end? What book could epitomise modern England or modern France? They defy simplification. Arabia does not: alone of all the countries of the world, it can be put into a single book. If instinctively Doughty chose Arabia for his wanderings, it was primarily because his mind demanded so large a subject, that no other could offer his artistic desire the bare possibility of fulfilment.

Burton, in a significant passage written some twenty years before Doughty set out on his journey, illuminates this very point. 'It is strange,' he wrote, 'how the mind can be amused amid scenery that presents so few objects to occupy it. But in such a country every slight modification of form or colour rivets observation: the senses are sharpened, and perceptive faculties, prone to sleep over a confused shifting of scenery, act vigorously when excited by *the capability of embracing each detail . . .*' This 'capability of embracing each detail' extends in Arabia not merely to the topographical field and to the geology, flora and fauna of the country, but to the daily life of the Arabs. And when we look more closely at Doughty's chosen subject, we become aware that its simplicity is the very simplicity of art, that the Arabs' life is itself a form of art, so that Doughty's task was less to turn a chosen subject into a book than to convert or translate one form of art into another! At the same time by sharing the Arabs' daily life he was entering into that living art; and to this by sublime accident was added the justly proportioned shape of a sequence of events comparable only, in the perfection of their collective form, to Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert*.

In passing, it is worthy of note that Lawrence, Doughty's nearest successor in literature, sought and solved a similar artistic problem. But Lawrence had not so much to translate the art of Arabian life into the art of letters as to convey, along with that life, the thing that is War. And war is to peace very much what Arabia is to a modern country: it presents a simplified form of life. The mind of the artist, striving ever to simplify and to make plain, is revolted by the oppressive complexities of peace and, seeking simplicity in life, as in art, turns with something like relief from the vexatious entanglements of a peaceful civilisation to the sharp simplicity of war. Like Doughty, Lawrence in Arabia seems to have sought and found an art-form which could be translated direct into the art of letters.

To appreciate thus the nature of the artistic impulse which formed the mainspring of Doughty's adventuring is to understand much that otherwise would remain incomprehensible in his journey. The successful issue of that journey, however—a triumphant success in the practical field of action, to which he was largely a stranger both before the journey and since—seems more surprising than ever when we remember that, though living the life of the Arabs throughout, his mind was reacting constantly against it. Yet in

this very fact lies a further clue to Doughty's character, a link with all the former and the latter years. If in Arabia his mind revolted against his companions, had it not done the like in England? When, in boyhood or in youth, did he make an intimate friend? If in the desert he lived solitarily in his own mind, had he not suffered equal solitude of spirit at home? Why should we call him Khalil in Arabia and Doughty at home? If a distinction must be drawn, he was Doughty in Arabia and Khalil at home. Living in constant reaction against the environment of the moment, he was an Englishman among Arabs, an Arab among the English.

For the thread of this essential trait was not broken by any change on the traveller's return from Arabia to Europe. Indeed his shattered health so accentuated the solitary detachment of his mind, that he was less able than ever to bring himself into smooth relationship with the world about him. The story of his negotiations for publication of the inscriptions of Medain Salih and of *Arabia Deserta* would make comical reading but for the reader's consciousness of a cruel lack of insight on the part of many of those with whom he had to deal. Five years after his return, too, Doughty lectured to the Royal Geographical Society—in the literary language, one gathers, of *Arabia Deserta* (which had yet to be published)—and was astonished that his lecture was not appreciated.

Much has been written about Doughty's deliberate use of language far removed from that of his day, both in *Arabia Deserta*, and in the immense poems to the composition of which he devoted the last forty years of his life. His own declaration of his purpose of 'resisting to my power the decadence of the English language' confirms all that has been written concerning the artistic aims which he cherished. But, whatever his conscious motive in rebelling against 'the decadence of the English language,' we discern in this constant revolt, side by side with the patriotic desire to uphold the prestige of English literature against any current tendency to decay, the deeper revolt of a sensitive and solitary spirit not merely against the oppressive vulgarities of a complex civilisation, but against the irksome contacts of everyday life itself.

Now, too, we seem to see that, more obvious difficulties apart, *Arabia Deserta* could not possibly have been written on the spot—that, to write his book, Doughty must look back upon himself. It was only in detachment from the circumstances described that

description became possible: the uncongenial pressure of their actuality would have inhibited the attempt. Such parts of the book as Doughty was able to write at all fully in Arabia are an insignificant fraction of the whole. And so again, when the time came for him to embark upon the great patriotic poem first meditated (as he himself said) more than twenty years earlier, we find his mind seeking by instinct not merely language, but scene and subject as far removed as possible from the living world in which he breathed. In this, as in nearly all his work, Doughty revealed that craving of the mind for things simple and remote, which has been a common trait of genius in literature, painting, music and every other art. Like most of the great figures in the history of creative art, he suffered, too, the inconvenient consequences of his detachment. It is usually difficult and always unprofitable to seek to determine whether this man or that may properly be labelled 'genius.' In judging the anatomy of Doughty's mind it is, perhaps, enough to borrow the cautious language of the Coroner's Court and to say that much of his work and all his sufferings were consistent with the possession of genius.

How do such men react to difficulty or danger? The less robust fail soon under the harsh drive of necessity; the stronger brace themselves to incredible effort and win. Doughty in Arabia won. Granted the extraordinary rapidity with which he gained a working knowledge of Arab character, the simple directness of speech which, as a merit in itself, often outweighed the awkward nature of his utterances, the implicit determination and courage which are a power in any society and in any circumstances—granted all these things, Doughty's success as a traveller in Arabia remains still a mysterious phenomenon of luck, utterly detached from the remainder of his life, until we realise that it is in the extremity of privation and peril that the most deeply seated qualities of such a mind appear. Not the social atmosphere of Arabian life, not the contrast of one environment against another can explain the seeming improbabilities of Doughty's journey, but the impulsion of need, the force of hunger and thirst, the constant daily imminence of death. Every part of his adventure that seems most remote from the rest of his life was forged on the anvil of necessity. The broken-headed rage of Mohammed Aly el Mahjub melts into muttered excuses and offers of help. Friendship deep and sincere is formed with Mohammed en Nejumy at Kheybar, and at Aneyza with Abdullah el Kenneyny and Abdullah el Bessam. Not food

but will sustain the fainting body through the sun-stricken, starving months. At Hayil, Boreyda, Aneyza and often in the desert the urgency of danger is stayed by some timely, deliberate word or act. In the terrible moments of peril at Ayn-es-Zeyma and es-Seyl, unhurried choice brings at last the way of final escape. And so, when the sick and impoverished Doughty, bewildered by his return to Europe, wrestles for many years to little purpose with the practical difficulties offered by the perfectly normal methods of publishers, printers and other worthy citizens of a civilised land, we are wrong if we pity him for having so little money. His misfortune was that he had any at all. If Doughty had been destitute, he would have risen to the occasion in England as he did in Arabia.

The way of the traveller returned is far from smooth. The surprising feature of Doughty's case is that even among scientific men no one but Dr. Sprenger, the Swiss Arabist (whose book, *Die Alte Geographie Arabiens*, accompanied Doughty throughout his journey) seems to have grasped the magnitude and importance of his achievement. For the rest, Doughty was an extraordinary man, and the way of such men is everywhere hard. It is doubly so in England, where the least deviation from type is observed with dismay and tolerated with extreme reluctance. In this country men love the familiar and hate the strange. An unusual person provokes thought, and the last insult one Englishman may lay upon another is to require him to think.

It is a matter of doubt at what stage of development the solitary character of such men's minds becomes definitely fixed, or even whether it is innate. Rival schools of psychology may debate the opposing claims of heredity and environment to determine the bent of the individual mind, and it may be that the answer to this question lies midway between the two points of view. In the absence of evidence of hereditary influence it is probably safest to refer back to the earliest years of life. Somewhere in the twilight mansion of the infant mind stands a thin dividing wall between solitude and multitude, the inner and the outer selves of man. Its presence may not be recognised, but it is there. In forty-nine cases out of fifty the wall is broken down by the natural processes of growth; in the fiftieth it remains unseen, to become in the building of the mind a barrier for ever impassable save in the direst emergency. The owner dwells in the solitary side of his mind, with his guardian-pride about him: no sounds of the

general world can penetrate that wall—all must reach him roundabout, through his private window—and, where his solitary room is the workshop of the artist, it is by that same window that he sends forth to mankind the fruit of his creative art. He has lost the world, and the world is fortunate if, in return, it gains a masterpiece.

This essential love of mental privacy lay behind Doughty's protests against the 'vulgar' language of modern times and all that it stands for. The most vulgar act in the world is to stare through someone else's window, and the hypersensitive mind, acutely conscious of a vulgarity in everyday life which others fail to perceive or habitually ignore, turns even from the trivial and unconsidered roughnesses of normal society to shield itself behind an impenetrable cloak of pride. That Doughty's pride was such as this, and not of an arrogant kind, appears at every stage of his long life. At Cambridge he was kind and helpful to his juniors. When critics wrote favourably of *Arabia Deserta*, he welcomed their praise. Too proud to follow Dr. Sprenger's advice that he should 'try for' the Founder's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, he was sincerely grateful when, after a lapse of more than thirty years, he was admitted to the ranks of its holders.

Was there a greater, among all those who travelled in Arabia? One by one we see them pass, a varied company: Niebuhr the Dane; 'Ali Bey' the mysterious Spaniard; Seetzen the German, whose records perished with him; the learned Burckhardt; Captain Sadlier, solemn and correct, an explorer in spite of himself; von Wrede, cruelly discredited for his pains; Wallin, the first true explorer of innermost Arabia; the hearty, redoubtable Burton; Palgrave, the half-Jew Jesuit, father of controversies not yet stilled; Julius Euting and ill-fated Huber; Wilfred and Lady Anne Blunt; Shakespear, Bury, Leachman, Gertrude Bell; and many another who went that way. One by one they file across the plain; they go down to their sunset. And above them, darkly against the afterglow, towers the gigantic shadow of Doughty, enduring, steadfast, greater than they.

'My career,' he wrote in his eightieth year, 'was to have been in the Navy, had I not been regarded at the medical examination as not sufficiently robust for the Service. My object in life since, as a private person, has been to serve my country so far as my opportunities might enable me.'

In a deeper sense than he knew, Doughty was a private person.

THE DISCOURSES OF FANICA.

SCENES FROM FRENCH UNIVERSITY LIFE IN THE PROVINCES.

I. ANDRÉ MAUROIS, HIS DISCIPLE.

I HAVE read André Maurois. That is why I went to France determined not to fall into the mistake of saying Messieu or of talking about Victor Hiougo. Forewarned is forearmed. That is also why, when I stepped from the Paris express on to the quay of that excellent station of Bordeaux Saint Jean, I refrained from asking where I could obtain a bang, but, using my best nasal, succeeded in making it clear that what I really wanted, if Mr. the Station Master would have the inconceivable bounty to direct me, was a bath. Mr. the Station Master, being a common or garden porter, was not only delighted to direct me, but insisted on accompanying me. For some hundred yards he walked with me, and I was successively informed in an interrogative tone that Monsieur (meaning, I correctly presumed, myself) had come from Paris, that it was a long journey, that Monsieur was tired, that it was quite to be understood that Monsieur desired a bath—this I took to be a tactful effort to dispel any illusions I might share with the average Englishman as to the customary squalor of the Frenchman, which I may add is largely, if not entirely fabulous—and lastly that Monsieur—but Monsieur was at the establishment of the baths, and—*mais quoi, passons cela sous silence*—at any rate, the station master accepted five francs for his trouble. For myself, I wondered if all Frenchmen were amateur detectives.

Under this unwarranted display of largess, I was concealing a poverty of exchequer bordering upon complete bankruptcy; so much so, in fact, that I was debating whether I could afford to let this bath materialise. After all, honour was satisfied. I had succeeded in making myself understood at the first attempt. Meanwhile another amateur detective was on my trail. He rightly deduced that Monsieur was desirous of having a bath. So convinced was he of this fact that Monsieur was actually having a bath before he had time to collect his senses.

Three days in France had sufficed to make a philosopher of

me, and the deep thought that welled up in my mind was that Bordeaux, commercial town as it was, had given me a cordial reception, one that was liable before long to entail considerable expense to myself—and—well—thank Heavens I was not in a tourist centre!

Such, old man, said I to myself, is the Frenchman's cordiality! Observe that, when I arrived in France I was armed, despite Maurois, with all the good old beef-eating Englishman's prejudices. Later I was to forget these prejudices. I was to hear Maurois speak on England, in the little Théâtre du Trianon, and I was to applaud him as much out of interracial sympathy as anything else, for he is far from being as good a speaker as he is a writer.

Bathed for four francs, I stepped out into a misty glimmer that was masquerading as the southern sun. The inner man called, as did a number of cafés that I later learned to call 'bistrots.' I selected the only one that had not a young lady standing in the door. Behold the power of prejudice! Insular that I was! And it was eight in the morning!

Anyhow, I walked into this café, and was greeted by a disreputable, toothless old hag, altogether a much more undesirable thing than the dreaded young lady, who, even if she should happen to be the type of young lady you are thinking of, is astute enough to know very well when she is not wanted. The French young lady, even the *fille*, is charming, in that she has about twice as much intuition as any other young lady that I have yet met.

Having consumed the accustomed *chocolat* and *croissants*, I ferreted out the Agence Générale des Etudiants, hereinafter termed the A.G. It was empty but for a few loafing individuals, whom I rightly took to be students. Here I was to make an astounding discovery—something very much akin to a long-lost uncle, except for the fact that he wanted money from me, contrary to the usual procedure of these convenient relatives.

A large gentleman, with a small moustache, approached me. He wore a velvet contraption on his head, and an engaging smile on his lips. His head-gear turned out to be the beret d'Etudiant, bearing the Trois Croissants de Bordeaux, of which more anon, through the garrulous but never-boring lips of this selfsame gentleman, whom I may introduce as he introduced himself to me, under the name of Fanica, *entre parenthèses, à la grosse tête*. Thus he introduced himself. At the time I was a little surprised at his seeming rather proud of this prodigiously disproportionate part of his

anatomy. The very idea of his drawing attention to it rather struck me, as it was in itself a little more than self-evident. He is, however, forgiven, for this head of his contained an excellent brain.

Here was another detective. He perceived that I had just arrived. However, I was no longer Monsieur. I was his *vieux*. Our intimacy grew very rapidly, for after some three sentences we had got the length of *tutoying* one and other. For some moments we discussed generalities, including the weather, which it appeared was disgusting in Bordeaux. It rained two hundred and eighty days in the year, and so on.

At length Fanica let fall the thunderbolt to which I have already referred.

'Enfin mon vieux-Forrest, je m'en vais te dire une bonne chose. Tu fais du Rugby toi? Regarde-moi donc un peu—eh bien, je suis votre parrain—'

Here was news indeed. This gentleman solemnly claimed to be my godfather. I was quite dazed, and once again I had occasion to appreciate the rapid action of these astounding Frenchmen. In less than two minutes I was a member of the B.E.C—before I had even matriculated at the university, which was, after all, my principal business at Bordeaux.

What was this B.E.C.? I did not know either—not until Fanica took me to a 'bistrot' *pour boire un coup*, which is to say, in the case of Fanica, for a grog, mysteriously called *américain*.

II. FANICA ON THE B.E.C. AND S.B.U.C.

The Cours Pasteur which contains the Faculté des Lettres and the famous A.G. and B.E.C., boasts no café of reasonable standing, so the amiable Fanica lead me to the Café Français, opposite the cathedral.

M. le Propriétaire seemed very familiar with Fanica, who explained that this was the *siège du Bec*. This meant but little to me, as I was still at a loss to know if this institution was a political faction, an insurrectionary committee or what. One hears so much about the intense political life in the French café!

We sat down in a corner, at a little marble table. A waiter wiped it clean with a very dirty bit of cloth and brought us two glasses of grog. Fanica then informed me that he objected to the *apéritif* habit because it was injurious to the walls of the stomach in some obscure fashion that I would not understand—even in

English, my friend, because you speak very good French—but I am a medical student.

He ordered two more glasses, and two young ladies that he must have invited to join us sat down at our table. I wondered if I were going to like this Fanica.

‘Permettez-moi de vous présenter le petit Forrest,’ dit-il, ‘drôle de type qui ne sait même pas ce que c’est que le Bec. Mon vieux, ce sont nos fétiches. Elles nous apportent le bonheur——’

His mascots, and mine too, apparently, since I had just joined the Bec! What sort of luck were they going to bring me? I was a *béciste*, but what did that mean? All three realised at the same moment that an explanation was indicated, and I was overwhelmed with a flood of explanation. At length Fanica overruled the two girls. The Bec was the Bordeaux Etudiants Club. It was the university athletic club, and I was seemingly to be in Fanica’s team, and these two girls, one his sister, and the other the fiancée of his brother. They formed our staunchest supporters, and on occasion our only spectators. But the great thing about the Bec was its aim, its *raison d’être*. Without doubt I had heard of the Stade Bordelais? Well, forget it, *mon vieux*! These people call themselves the S.B.U.C.—Stade Bordelais University Club. University Club! There is not a student in the club. The student club is the Bec! S.B.U.C. in verity stands for Stade Bordelais Uniquement Commercial. Fanica was warming to his work. He next ventured to sing the war-song of the Bec, the burden of which seemed to be a prayer for the Stade Bordelais:

‘Ah prions Dieu pourque le Stade crève——’

Fanica was no socialist! Very few of the students, it seemed, were. Remark, *mon petit* Forrest, because it is well to know all about these things, that Bordeaux is divided into two distinct parts. First there is the commercial section, which includes the *petits fonctionnaires*, who have several clubs, by far the most important, the most obnoxious of which is the Stade. This club apparently exerted a very awkward influence on the too sensitive stomach of M. Fanica, if he is to be taken literally. Then, there is the student section, which is entirely self-contained, has a prodigious *esprit de corps*, and is looked on rather dubiously by all and sundry, including the police, who delight to arrest students on the least of pretexts. The university authorities, however, are a worthy body of gentlemen, who never hold it against a student to have seen the inside of a gaol, unless it be for some genuine offence—and so on.

'You are lucky in England. The *petits commerçants* do not play Rugby. You all play for the fun of it. It is always the match *amical*. Here in the south we like to play for the fun of the game. We cannot. Why? Because the *petits commerçants* are spiteful. The game is for them a class war. They will win at any cost. It is not Rugby. We students, we try to play the game. They will not let us. *Pas vrai, Fifine?*'

'Mais exactement. C'est des brutes.'

Fanica was tiring. Besides, he was nearly inarticulate with rage. He had worked himself up most terribly. Fifine imagined that she was more intelligible talking with her eyes than with her tongue, but I had only been in France three days, and had not yet learned the language. So the conversation flagged.

Fanica and I had the same idea at the same moment. We seemed to have something in common, to be made for friendship with one and other. We spoke our thought.

'A propos, mon vieux, j'ai pas le sou.'

Whereupon we each produced the necessary number of sous to pay half the bill, and Fanica, in his southern impetuosity, ordered the same again.

Fanica smiled. He wished to tell a joke. It seemed that the Scots were *très chiches*. Far from being annoyed, I was rather pleased that our name had spread so far. Fanica now embarked on the rather touching story of the two taxis going along the deserted Princes Street one night, and coming inexplicably into collision. The result of this unfortunate disaster, which dissolved my three companions in laughter, was that no fewer than thirty people were injured.

I preserved a solemn face. It is entirely possible, after all. We Scots do have the habit of travelling ten or twelve in a taxi, and these people might have been from Aberdeen, which is *une ville extrêmement chiche*! Fanica marvelled at the foundation of truth in these apparently fantastic stories, until I told him that the first time I had heard the story it had taken place in Auvergne.

The diplomat changed the subject. The weather, as he had said, was very bad in this town. He would tell me some more about it. I began to wonder if it had been worth my while to come so far south in search of sun.

The ladies had left us. Fanica smiled mysteriously. His smiles were always eloquent; all his features were eloquent. I think that is why he was always an interesting talker.

'You know what they call Bordeaux? It is so wet—no? They call it the *Pôt de Nuit du Bon Dieu*.'

The ladies returned. The incorrigible gentleman told them that he had just been telling me what Bordeaux was vulgarly called.

'Ah, oui,' cried Fifine, '*La Ville des Trois Croissants*.'

Trois croissants—that recalled to me that I must obtain lodgings of some sort, if I were to have my customary breakfast the next morning. *Vraiment je n'avais plus le sou, mais heureusement ces dames venaient de payer nos grogs.*

III. SALAUD.

I am now in the same *pension* as Fanica. I am quite content, as I am living entirely on credit. I do not have to pay my bill until the end of the month, and I have had my morning *croissants*.

Fanica has gone to an early class, and, as the other *pensionnaires* seem to be very much interested in themselves, I am reading a book. It is very amusing, in spite of the fact that it contains much slang that I do not altogether understand. It is *les Gaîtés de l'Escadron*, of Courteline.

If only I had known what this book was to bring on me, I might have burned it on the spot, even though it cost me fourteen francs on credit. One thing that impressed me hugely was the informal camaraderie of the conscript soldiers. I liked their cavalier method of addressing each other. Gradually it dawned upon me that I might imitate it, that I might enter properly into the spirit of these warm-blooded southerners. And so it came about that I planned a little surprise for my friend Fanica.

The day wore on, and the more I read of friend Courteline, the more I became convinced that my little surprise was going to be an immense success, and further, that Fanica would soon come to have an even more profound admiration for my French. With eagerness I awaited his return from his morning classes.

At length he came, cheery as ever.

'Eh bien, mon vieux,' he called, '*comment va-t-elle?*'

'Qui donc?'

'La petite santé, quoi!'

'Mais très bien, salaud que t'es!'

Then he suddenly burst into a fury. He certainly was *soupe*

au lait, but I did not begin to understand why he was so angry. He burst into an incoherent flow of what presumably was French, stormed out of the room, and slammed the door behind him. So this was the warm-blooded spirit that I wished to cultivate! Discouraged, but quite resigned, I returned, with proverbially British tranquillity, to my Courteline.

The lunch bell went.

The meal proceeded without a word from Fanica to me, his self-adopted protégé. Not so much as a glance did I get. I determined not to try to open up the conversation. After all, he might have had a knife concealed in his sleeve. With these hot-heads one cannot exercise too much caution.

We both went out to classes in the afternoon. It was then that I met a certain Mr. Macdonald, who, as the name indicates, was *Américain*. Some years older than myself, and inordinately sagacious, he immediately gained my confidence. I spoke to him about Fanica's strange mood. He also was at a loss to explain this sudden sulkiness on the part of one so genial as I had made Fanica out to be. It might be, of course, that the man was an out-and-out rotter, a sort of decoy to lure people into this sinister *pension*. After a day or two of excellent treatment, such innocents would be done away with, and their belongings appropriated. They might be shipped off to the Foreign Legion. That sort of thing was quite common, but the elaborate Heath Robinsonesque scheme of the *pension* was superfluous. It was more likely that their bodies would just be thrown into the river, there to be nibbled by the fish, and later, possibly, to be fed to the very band of scoundrels that ran this obscure *pension*.

On the other hand, as my credit in the *pension* seemed to contradict this theory, it might all boil down to the fact that Fanica was a moron (variety of mentally deficient that seems to abound in the United States). After all, these large-headed people were always apt to have, at the best, little eccentricities, and it might be that for some reason Fanica had suddenly taken a vivid dislike to me, and was out for my blood.

My American friend left me with the sound admonition to lock the door of my bedroom very carefully that night, to which he added as an afterthought, that I should do well not to take any food at supper, until I was well assured that the other *pensionnaires* were eating without any ill effects.

All these things I decided to do, inwardly blessing a certain

circumstance that had hitherto rather annoyed me, to wit, that I was last in order of service.

I had spent an utterly miserable afternoon. Home I went in a dejected mood. I picked up my Courteline and read a story of how the soldiers had tried to assassinate their *sous-officier*. Strange, it seemed to me, that the French always assassinate their enemies; they never resort to such gentle means as mere murder. I wondered how it would feel to be assassinated. Pretty ghastly! But what a dastardly thing to do to an inoffensive foreigner! Then the utter ridiculousness of the whole thing struck me, and with a feeling of relief I strolled into the next room to get my cigarettes, which I had left there after lunch, which had resulted in my smoking Macdonald's all afternoon. It happened to be the first time that I had tasted Lucky Strike, and my esteem of American civilisation had risen considerably.

When I got back to the room where I had left Courteline, a new phase of this astounding drama revealed itself. Courteline was gone! I was at a loss to explain this, but I seemed to remember that Charles IX had been killed by poison applied to the leaves of a book.

However, I strolled gaily in to supper. There was Fanica sitting reading my Courteline, apparently quite innocently. He looked up with a pleasant smile. I hesitated as to whether to return it, but he was irresistible.

'Tu sais, mon cher, il ne faut pas apprendre le français dans des livres comme ça. Bien, c'est l'argot de caserne, tu sais. Les étudiants ne se traitent pas de salauds. C'est pas chic, quoi! Ça se dit pas entre amis. Bougre, si tu veux; salaud, ah, ça non! Tu vois, à Bordeaux on est le gentleman—à la Sorbonne, que sais-je? Il se peut que l'on se permette ce mot—'

Then I explained how my plan had been to dazzle him with my brilliant knowledge of slang. However, he repeated that at Bordeaux one was the gentleman, and did not address one's companions, or even one's intimates in that manner.

'Si l'on t'entend dire de ces choses-là, tu sais ce qu'on dira? On se dira sur un ton de dégout, "Ce Forrest, c'est un salaud!"'

IV. LES FEMMES QUELCONQUES.

I have just left the class of a very learned professor, who has been doing an *explication de textes* with his candidates for the licence.

'Elle s'approcha du feu,' he has quoted, from I forget what. He continues in a dramatic voice, 'Pourquoi, pourquoi—mais pourquoi?' He has raised his voluble finger, in a gesture that means, 'I know, but none of you could possibly guess.' The class apparently takes this for granted, and there is a tense silence, which lasts for fully thirty seconds. The professor raises both hands in a gesture of despair at our imbecility.

'Mais c'est parfaitement simple—pour se chauffer!'

After that I must have fallen asleep.

As I came out into the entrance hall of the Faculté des Lettres, I saw Fanica waiting for me. Although it was only half-past five, the vast hall was in a half-obscurity, poorly lighted by spluttering gas lamps. There was a smell of gas, and the whole atmosphere was very depressing.

It appeared that the faculty of medicine was equally so, for Fanica greeted me with a cheery, 'J'en ai marre, mais bougrement,' which is his way of saying that he is fed up to the back teeth.

We stepped out on to the broad pavement in front of the faculty, and walked along towards the A.G. We were about to go in, when Fanica gave vent to his distaste for anything connected with the university. It seems that a very few days of term suffice to tire him of his studies. So we wandered aimlessly on, and round in front of the cathedral, in the inevitable direction of the Café Français, *siège du Bec*. Fanica explained that he did not consider that the Bec was part of the university, so we dropped into the café, and ordered *bocks*.

We found Saussier there, apparently in an equal state of boredom. However, we decided to make the best of a bad job, and lit our *jaunes*, which we smoked with an entirely inexplicable relish. For myself, bored as I was, I was enjoying myself immensely, and wallowing in the local colour supplied by a Frenchman being bored.

'Eh bien, on fiche le camp?'

I came to with a start. I had been so lost in my meditations that I had not even realised that our departure had been suggested.

'Bien, alors, mais pour quoi faire?'

Fanica told me that we were going in search of *des femmes quelconques*. I knew what he meant? Well, they were *des poules*, *tu sais?* I did, and accordingly demurred. I had no intention of mixing myself up with any casual young ladies, at this early point in my stay in Bordeaux. My friends insisted, and, to save myself being thought the most awful wet blanket in earth, I went

with them, especially as they explained that it was merely *pour rigoler un peu, c'est tout*. On these conditions I agreed to go. We went out into the rain, which was now quite a downpour. In spite of this, the Frenchmen refused to put on their trench coats properly, but put them across their shoulders with the arms dangling loose, and gathered in the coat with their hands from the inside, after the manner of a Spaniard.

First we went to the Grand Café, at the top of the Intendance, which is the principal street for all kinds of commerce, including what old Montaigne calls the *commerce des femmes*. We had *bock* and monkey-nuts. A few tables away from us were seated two rather disreputable young women. My friends immediately began to appreciate their points, much as an Englishman might size up a horse. I sat, feeling rather foolish, and was quite satisfied when they came to the conclusion that these *poules* were *moches comme tout, et ne valaient pas la peine d'accrocher*. Before long we satisfied ourselves that we were just wasting our time, sitting in this café, as no really charming girls seemed to be likely to come in.

So we sallied forth into the Intendance and proceeded to walk down the street. We had walked but a few yards, when Saussier clutched my arm, and pointed to the other side of the street.

'Regarde-moi ça, mon vieux, les jolies jambes qu'elle a, pas vrai ?'

So we crossed the street, and gave chase. She was fast—what I mean to say is that her velocity was considerable—and, as we lost ground by crossing the street, it was some minutes before we got sufficiently close to make up our minds as to whether she was worth the trouble *d'accrocher*. As we overhauled her, my companions seemed to take great delight in describing her to one and other, in much the same terms as occur again and again in the edifying works of Marcel Prévost. *Ah, le balancement de ces hanches, c'est chic ça*. Then suddenly, the transports were cut short as the lady turned into the *café chez la Marquise de Sévigné*, which is the most expensive tea-room in town. In fact, it is a genuine tea-room.

We turned about, and, nothing daunted, set out again on our quest for *des femmes quelconques*. I was rather surprised at the difficulty we were having, because, to listen to my friends, one would have thought that between such a pair of dashing young men it was impossible that they did not know just about every *femme quelconque* in Bordeaux.

I had just completed this philosophical thought when I got the fright of my life. Fanica, as usual, was the leader. He approached two girls, who were standing with their backs to us looking into a shop-window. He raised his hat, and, with a dapper little bow, wished them good evening, and suggested that we all go to a picture-house together *pour rigoler un peu*.

I hardly thanked him for letting me in for this, but there was nothing to be done about it. Saussier seemed to know the girls too, and I was quite convinced that they must indeed be *tout à fait quelconques*.

'Bon Dieu de bon Dieu,' cried Saussier to one of the girls, 'it is a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you.'

Then we turned towards the Intendance picture-house. Just as we were going in, one of the girls cried out, 'Ah, mon Dieu, voilà Marceline qui vient, et très à propos. Nous ne sommes que cinq—faut être six, hein?'

So Marceline joined the happy band, and we went in, I feeling more uncomfortable at every step. Five was not bad, but now that we were six, it looked as if I would have a woman to entertain all by myself, in the seclusion of a *loge de face* withal! I was at a loss as to how to treat such a person. I did not even know how far I was expected to go, because I had been given to understand that it was just as bad to disappoint these people as to outrage them.

I draw a discreet curtain over this performance. I put my foot in it right away. Trying to make polite conversation, I looked round the hall, and innocently remarked to my companion:

'Il y a du monde au balcon, pas vrai?'

My remark was coldly received, and I imagined that something more daring was expected of me. For two hours I perspired heavily.

At length it was all over, and we took leave of our friends at the door. Fanica asked me how I had enjoyed myself. I admitted that I had not the French spirit, and had not even held the girl's hand.

'Bon Dieu de bon Dieu,' exclaimed Saussier, 'tu n'es pas sérieux, mon petit Forrest? Bon Dieu de bon Dieu, j'en suis bien heureux, moi. C'était à ma soeur que tu avais affaire!'

Then why did they not present me to her properly? I blessed my English modesty for saving me from an extremely awkward situation.

We had a *bock*, and then Fanica and I left the others. As we walked home under a wet moon, he moralised. After all, he claimed, the Frenchman was not a bad fellow. He was never done talking about his *femmes quelconques*, *mais il n'en connaissait pas*. *Ou presque pas*, he added, whether for the sake of honesty or for his Don Juan reputation, I have yet to find out.

(*To be continued.*)

ROBERT G. DUNDAS.

QUARTET.

TO E. W. H.

A shadowed room, a golden fire
That round the players its radiance wreathes,
A silence eager to respire
The incense that the music breathes—

O players, through the dusk you pour
Your music, making live for me
The soul locked in the silent score,
Dumb heart and prisoned ecstasy.

One touch—and genius lives again :
The long trance ends, the dream spreads wings :
Music—and to its wordless strain
You lend the passion of the strings.

Wing far my thought ! Loose wide my dream !
This hour, from earthly care set free,
I claim, and merged in joy's full stream
Timeless forget mortality.

L. H.

LITERARY ACROSTICS

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 105.

'And let us mind ——— ne'er wan
A lady fair:
Wha does the utmost that he can
Will whyles do mair.'

1. 'To-morrow to ——— woods and pastures new.'
2. 'The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward ——— we fled.'
3. 'O mother ———, many-fountain'd ———,
Dear mother ———, harken ere I die.'
4. 'Better once than ———, for ——— too late.'
5. 'And many a holy ——— around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page viii of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 105 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than May 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO No. 104.

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------|---|
| 1. | E | xamin | E |
| 2. | N | oo | N |
| 3. | G | urglin | G |
| 4. | L | aure | L |
| 5. | A | uror | A |
| 6. | N | atio | N |
| 7. | D | rui | D |

PROEM: Shakespeare, *King John*, v. 7.

LIGHTS:

1. Barham, *Ingoldsby Legends*. *The Jackdaw of Rheims*.
2. Herrick, *Hesperides*. *To Daffodils*.
3. Southey, *The Inchcape Rock*.
4. Marvell, *The Garden*.
5. Milton, *L'Allegro*.
6. Kipling, *The Five Nations*. *Our Lady of the Snows*.
7. Cowper, *Boadicea*.

Acrostic No. 103 ('Rabbit Eaglet'): The Lewis Carroll acrostic was not a difficult one, and the majority of solvers sent correct answers. The prizes are won by Mrs. Clayden, Wellwood, Guest Road, Parkstone, Dorset, and Miss A. C. Harding, 9 Bradmore Road, Oxford, who will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

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